Timetable
for Victory:
The 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade at the Battle of Vimy Ridge
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Title Slide

On 9 April 2017, 25,000 Canadians gathered in France to pay homage to one of Canada's moments in history. For some The Battle of Vimy Ridge was a nation building focal point. For others, it was an example of the Canadian Corps becoming the "tip of the spear" of the British Imperial Army. The can-do force that was sent to trouble spots to solve tricky tactical problems.

In this presentation I will focus on the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade as its operations and success is representative of the preparations and outcomes of the entire Canadian Corps.

Using original source material we will explore some of the components that made this action a success.

Veterans of Vimy Ridge RCL Branch 41 St Thomas ON

Title: April 9, 2012 marked the 95th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The 50th anniversary was commemorated in St. Thomas in April 1967 with a wreath-laying ceremony at the Pearl Street Cenotaph.

Left to right are, front row: A. B. Ellis, Roy Palmerston, Jack Bentley, Art Cooper, Harry Marshall and A. E. Watts; second row, J. F. Pratt, George Smith, Dan Jackson, Cyril Brown, Chet Smith, Maurice Heath, M. Nicholls; third row, E. B. Martel, Bert Watson, Jim Baron, Ted Bentley and Charles McAvay; fourth row, Reg. Mayne, Ellis Walker, Art Hardy, George Tanner, Rev. Charles Cook, Louis Mann, not identified; fifth row, Bill Crocker, Alex Betterley, Ernie Mitchell, Fred Lawson and George Hambleton; sixth row, J. E. Johnson, Frank Sefton, not identified, Joe Skelding, Stan Robinson, Harvey Pettit and C. W. Ball.

Creator(s): St. Thomas Times-Journal
Bygone Days Publication Date: April 7, 2012
Original Publication Date: April 10, 1967
Reference No.: C9 Sh3 B2 F1 34c
Credit: Elgin County Archives, St. Thomas Times-Journal fonds

Veterans

It is appropriate to take a moment and think on the men in this photograph.

As Vimy vets they may have literally walked the ground in this photograph. Think about this for a moment. The broken ground and the noises and the smells that they would have experienced in the heat of battle. Their perspective would have been much different on the day of the battle from what we can imagine. These veterans' collective experiences in many ways have been lost, and it is our duty to reach back into time and try to understand the circumstances of their service and their sacrifices. This presentation will give us the opportunity to begin imagining their experiences.

Overview

During this presentation we will have a quick overview of a structure of an army as it pertains to the place a battalion holds in the military hierarchy.

The geography of the ground over which this battle occurred is important and a review of the geographic features that make the Vimy sector unique will help us understand the battle space.

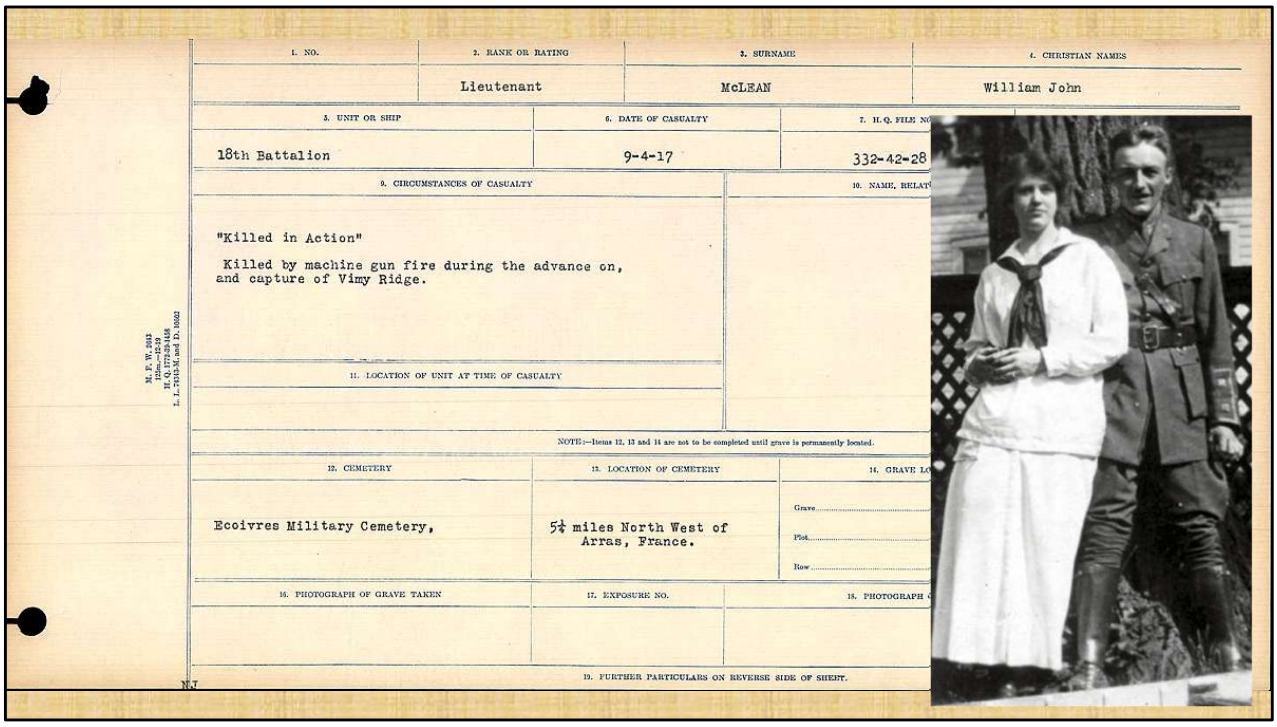
The immediate response to the battle in Canada shows the influence of our place in the British Empire in regard to our identification within the larger context of the British Empire.

The work required for victory at the Brigade level.

This tactical analysis helps us understand, not only the reasons for our success at Vimy, but allows some insight into the soldier on the ground.

Structure of an Army
Army
• A number of Corps
Corps
• A number of Divisions
• CEF - 4 divisions in Canadian Corps
Division
• 4 brigades in a Canadian division
Brigade
• 4 Battalions in a Canadian brigade
• Corps/Division/Brigade troops
• Engineers, rail, construction, entrenching, other
• 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade
• 18th Battalion
• 19th Battalion
• 20th Battalion
• 21st Battalion
• 4th Trench Mortar Battery
• 4th Machine Gun Company

The terms such as battalion division and brigade are thrown around and often are not completely understood so this is an opportunity for us to take a look at how an army was structured. And start with an army which is a number of core and then there are a number of divisions that make up a core then we have a brigade and there were 4 battalions in the Canadian brigade whereas the British went from a 4 brigade system to a 3 brigade system later on in the war. Inside the Canadian Corps divisions and brigades had supporting units.



1. NO.	2. RANK OR RATING	3. SURNAME	4. CHRISTIAN NAMES
	Lieutenant	McLEAN	William John

5. UNIT OR SHIP	6. DATE OF CASUALTY	7. H. Q. FILE NO.
18th Battalion	9-4-17	332-42-28

9. CIRCUMSTANCES OF CASUALTY

"Killed in Action"

Killed by machine gun fire during the advance on, and capture of Vimy Ridge.

10. NAME, RELAT

11. LOCATION OF UNIT AT TIME OF CASUALTY

NOTE:—Items 12, 13 and 14 are not to be completed until grave is permanently located.

12. CEMETERY	13. LOCATION OF CEMETERY	14. GRAVE LO
Ecoivres Military Cemetery,	5½ miles North West of Arras, France.	Grave Plot Row

16. PHOTOGRAPH OF GRAVE TAKEN	17. EXPOSURE NO.	18. PHOTOGRAPH

19. FURTHER PARTICULARS ON REVERSE SIDE OF SHEET.

M. F. W. 1013
12-7-20—25,000
H. Q. 1772-29-1418
L. L. 72915-M. and D. 35502

N.T

Lt. Mclean

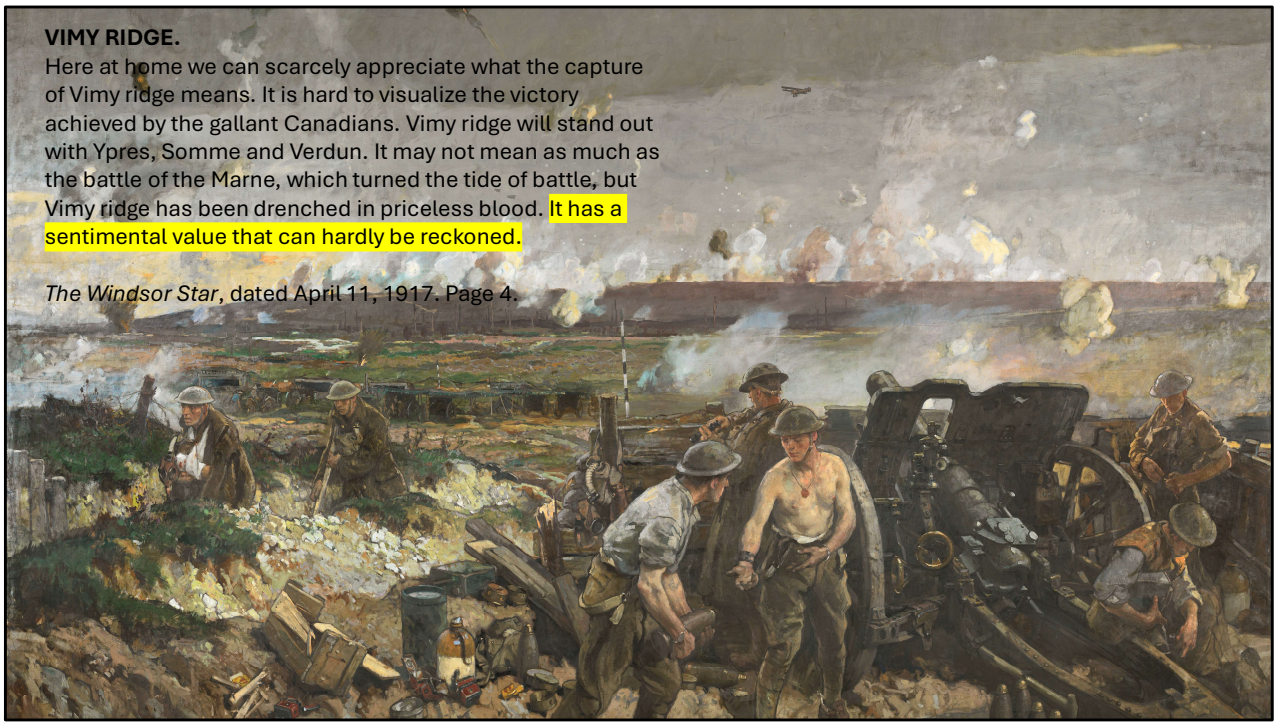
This short letter from Lieutenant McClain give us some context to a soldier's feelings before the attack. You can see from the tone that he's confident that everything will go well, and he does acknowledge that there's an opportunity that he may be killed during the battle itself. In fact, he acknowledges that his parents will find out about his death before they receive the letter that he is just written to them. And sadly, he was killed on April 9th.

Though the letter is very brief it gives an idea of the confidence and attitude of a soldier that was fighting with the 4th Canadian infantry brigade at that time.

What the news
THE WEATHER.
Fair Tuesday and probably Wednesday; rising temperature.
VOL. 28, NO. 12.
GREAT BR
HAIG'S MEN
OF GIAN
7,004)
CANADIANS, AIDED BY 'TANKS' CAPTURE FAMOUS VIMY RIDGE AND 2,000 HUN PRISONERS
Stronghold Seized in Surprise Attack; Foe Troops Dazed by British Artillery Fire.
CANADA WILL BE PROUD, SAYS KING
(United Press.)
LONDON, April 10.—King George sent this message to Field Marshal Haig:
"The whole empire will rejoice at the news of yesterday's successful operations.
"Canada will be proud that taking of the coveted Vimy ridge has fallen to the lot of her troops.
"I heartily congratulate you and all who have taken part in this splendid achievement."
G RECORD.
E IN FULL SWING
UNS IN FIRST DAY
ORD.
PIANO TUNING—$2.50
Work Guaranteed.
HEINTZMAN & CO.
Phone 608.
PRICE TWO CENTS
LL SWING
IRST DAY
WEST FRONT
GERMAN TORPEDO BOAT SUNK BY BRITISH SUB

Newspaper Headline

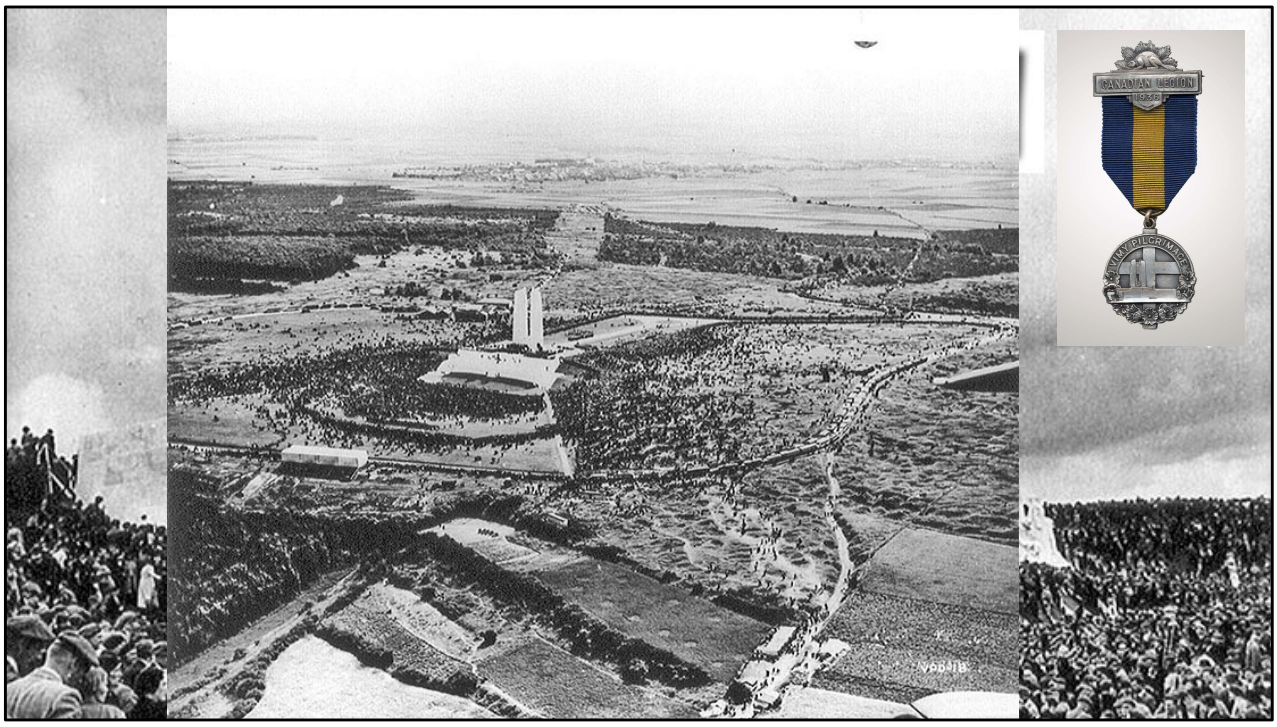
This newspaper headline from the Windsor Evening Record on the 10th of April 1917 indicates the context in which the Vimy battle was taken by the public in Canada at the time. You will note that the headline indicates the larger effort of of the British Imperial Forces as a whole and that, as far as type setting is concerned, the secondary role of the Canadian Forces. You'll notice on the left hand side the words Canadians aided by tanks capture famous Vimy Ridge and 2,000 prisoners. It's below the main headline and shows to some degree that the news was important but subsidiary to the main interests of the reader at the time. This gives us some indication as to the influence of British culture and politics in the Canadian context in 1917.


VIMY RIDGE.
Here at home we can scarcely appreciate what the capture of Vimy ridge means. It is hard to visualize the victory achieved by the gallant Canadians. Vimy ridge will stand out with Ypres, Somme and Verdun. It may not mean as much as the battle of the Marne, which turned the tide of battle, but Vimy ridge has been drenched in priceless blood. It has a sentimental value that can hardly be reckoned.
The Windsor Star, dated April 11, 1917. Page 4.

Sentimental Value

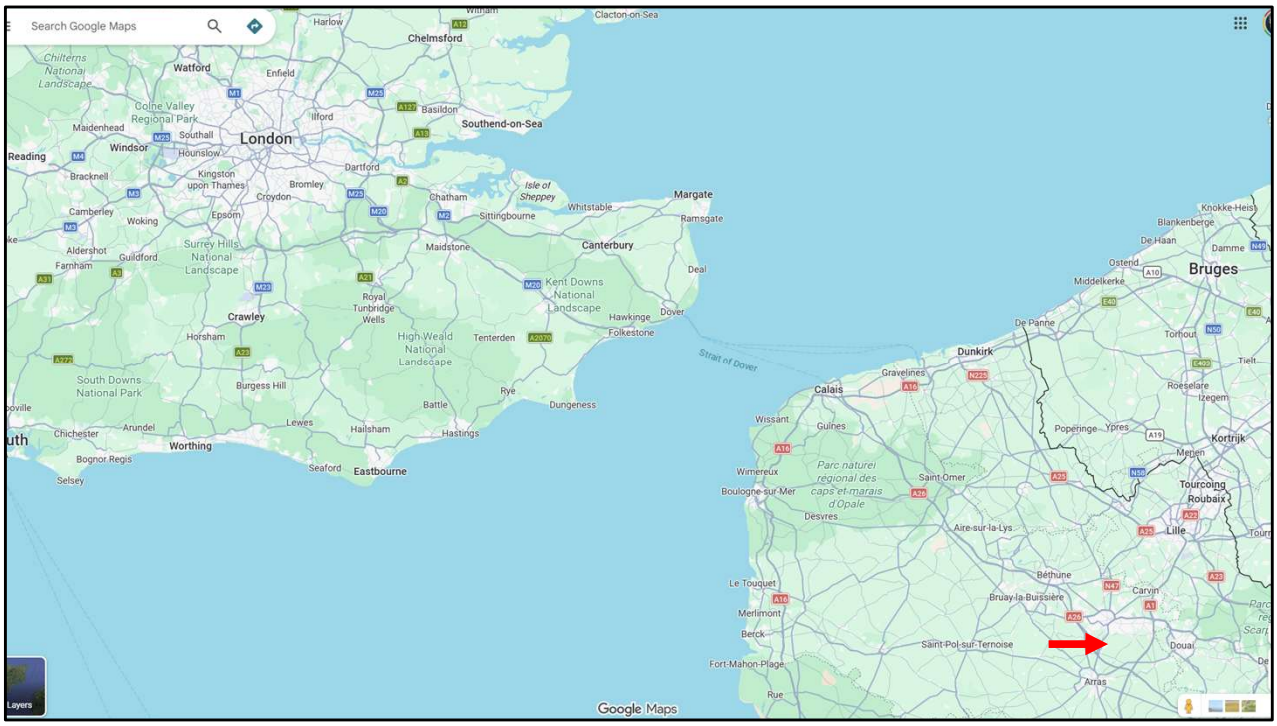
The very next day…

This was a clipping that I happened upon quite by accident but what I think is really interesting that if you read the clip is the very last line which basically says quote it has a sentimental value that can hardly be reckoned" indicating that a portion of the Canadian public understood the importance of the battle in regards to the success that the Canadians experienced at Vimy Ridge. Could this be possibly the beginning of the Vimy myth?



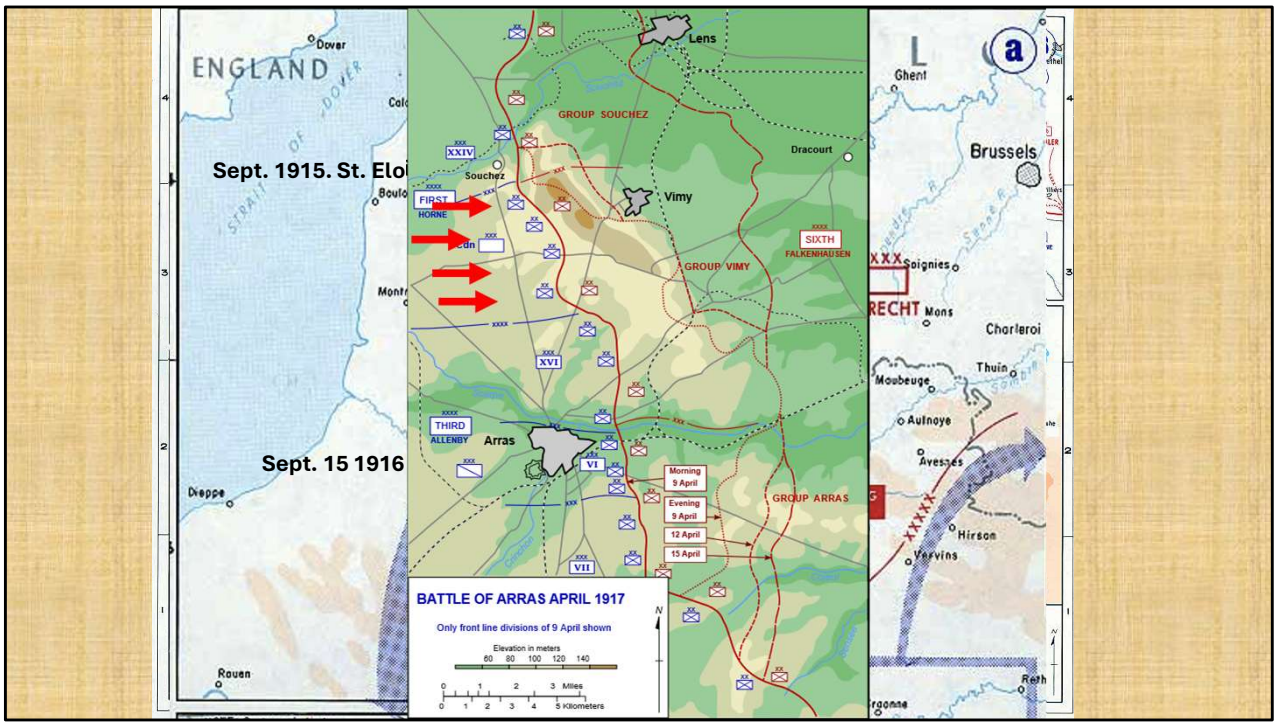
Vimy Memorial Photo

Certainly, as this slide shows from the unveiling of the Vimy Memorial 26 July 1936 that there was an incredible interest by veterans and the Canadian public in general in the efforts to recognize the fallen. The symbolism and the draw of the geography of Vimy was is unmistakable in the Canadian context, especially with the grandeur of such an imposing monument. Having been there myself, I can attest to the fact that when driving up and seeing the memorial in the distance stirs a level of pride and patriotism that defines and focuses my feelings as a citizen of our great country.



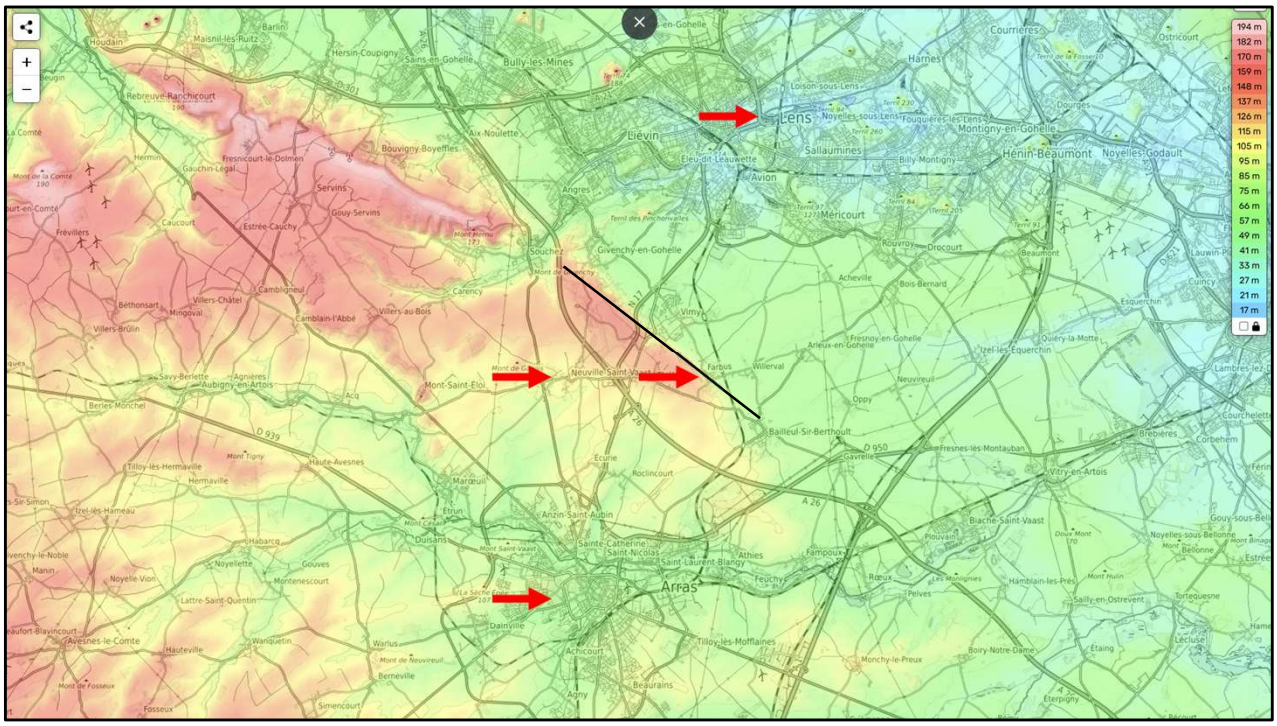
Where is Vimy

This slide is basically designed to help people place where the Vimy area was. Including the southeastern part of England an the northeastern part of France puts it into a context that can help us geographically place where Vimy is In relation to our understanding of geography. It's good to know where places are.



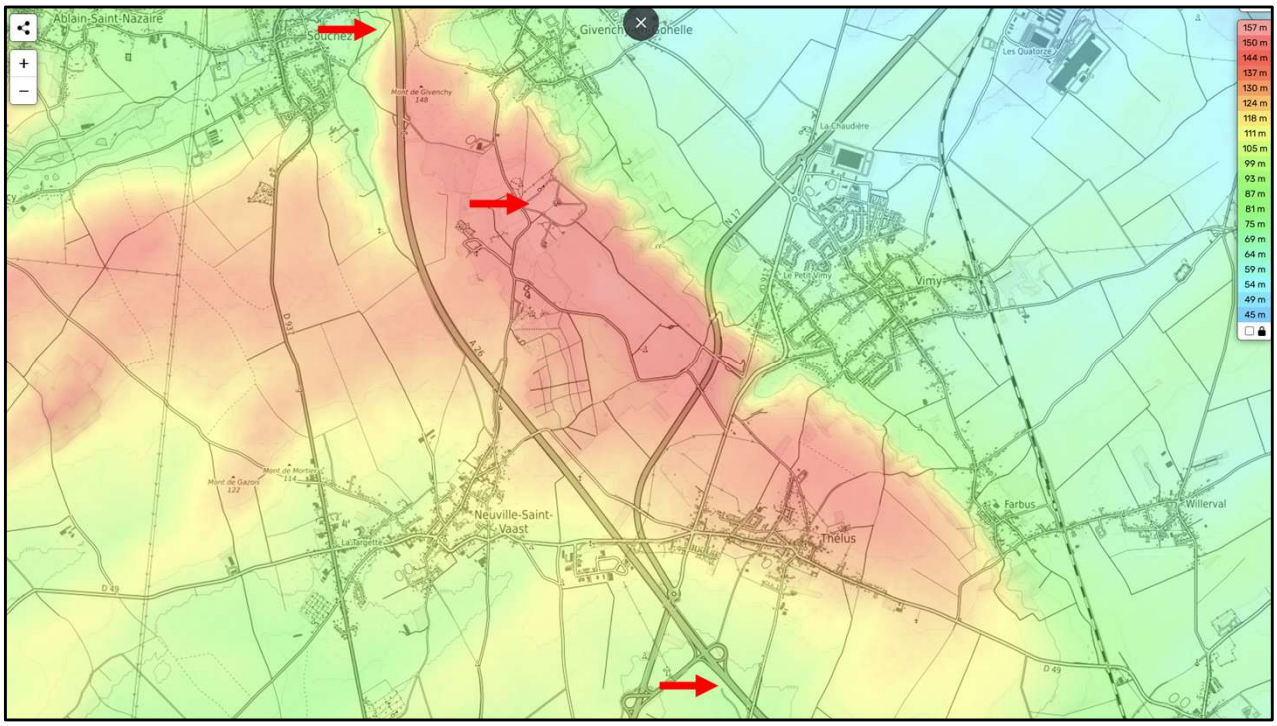
The Area of Operations for the Canadian Corps

Here we can see the area of operations of the Allies during World War 1. This map shows the front lines as of January 1917. I am using this map as an opportunity to show you the two other major operations that the 4th Canadian infantry brigade was involved in during its service in Belgium and France. Arriving in September 1915 they were engaged at St. Elois Craters in the spring of 1916 and then they were involved in the battle of Flers-Courcelette on 15 September 1916. Both of those battles were learning opportunities for the Canadian Army, and they were hard won lessons.

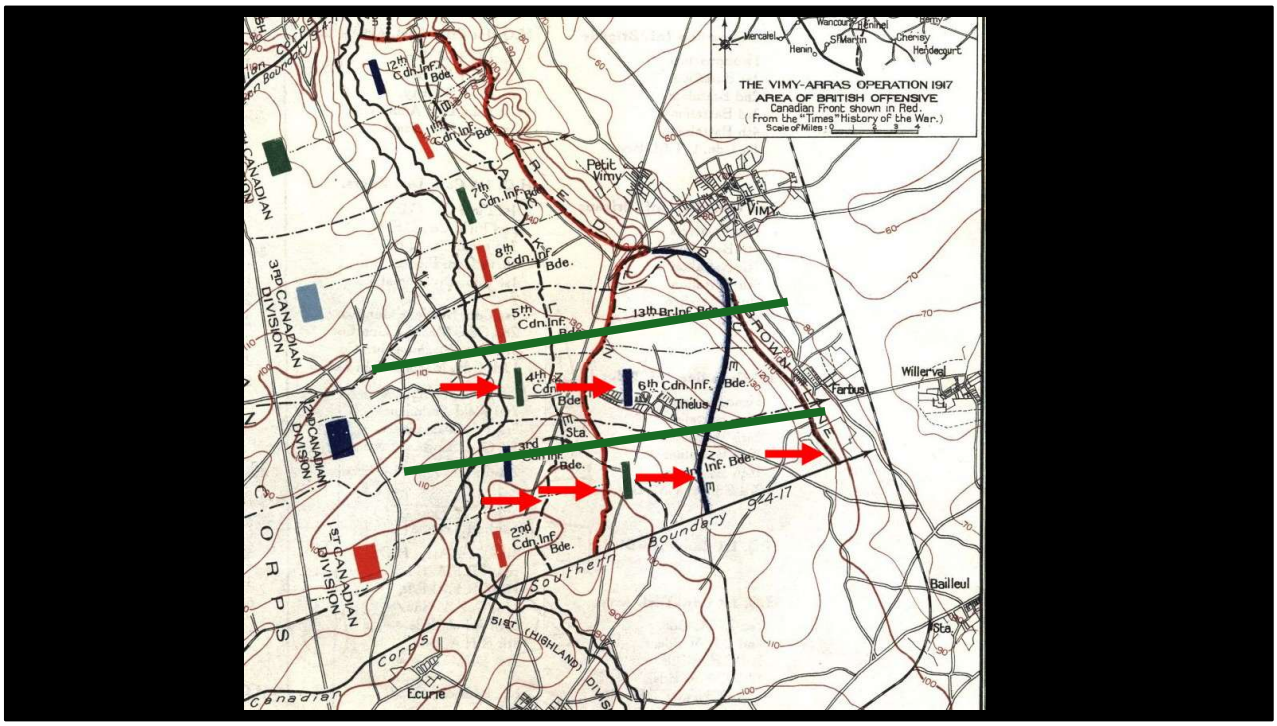


Geography

This map overviews the Vimy sector from the profile of allowing us to see the town of Arras to the South of the Ridge Ann Glenn to the north. The black line indicates affectively the height of the Ridge an if you can imagine looking off towards lens living memorial is just slightly left of centre of that black line. This map helps us understand the geographic context of the battle and the challenges that the Canadian forces had in attacking the heights. What is not understood and will be seen in another slide is the Germans weren't at the top of the Ridge with the deployment of their front-line trenches. This will become clearer in the next couple slides.



This is a zoomed in view of the previous map and if you look at the limited access highway that has a north-south axis follows what effectively would have been the German frontline. So you could see that the influence of geography not only occurs during the First World War but also was a factor in designing a road to service the local communities after the war.



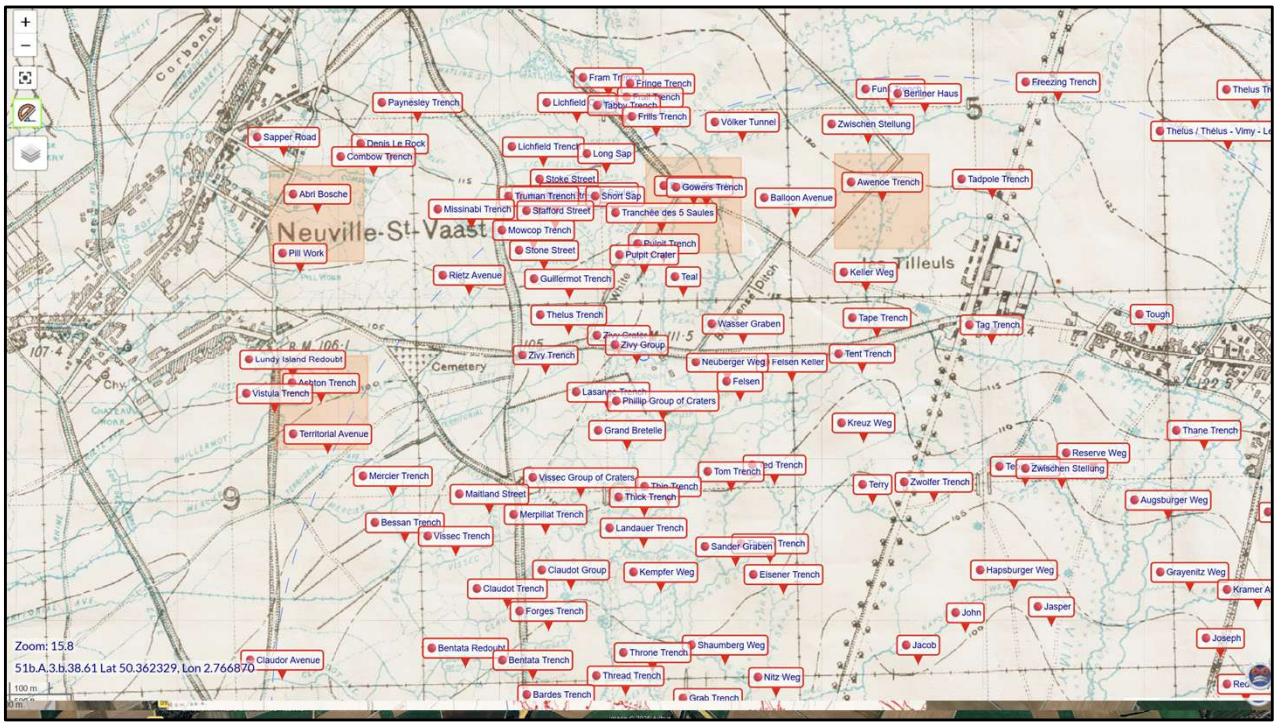
Areas of responsibility

One of the important aspects of the battle was the areas of responsibility during the attack. This image gives us an opportunity to understand how the Canadian Corps was positioned during the battle. We have from the South to the north the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Canadian divisions represented by the large, coloured rectangles and the green lines give the area of responsibility for the 2nd Canadian division. You can see that it is formulated to follow the road from Thelus to Farbus. It shows specifically the area of responsibility for the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade in the green slash and then the 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade passing through the 4th to move and take positions past the red line. Here the order of objectives was the black line, then the red line, then the blue line.

Brigade Headquarters for the Battle

Zivy crater was a key geographical component for the 4th Canadian infantry brigade. This was to be at headquarters during the battle and all the messages that were being sent from it's associated units would be set from those units back to the crater. The crater exists today as a burial ground for Canadian soldiers and there are 53 burials represented by this cemetery. 48 are Canadian and identified and two are Canadians unidentified with an additional 2 unidentified soldiers from different units whose nationality is unknown.

This map also gives us a closer detail of the area of operations for the 4th Canadian infantry Brigade, and we can see the orientation of the advance from left to right. Essentially the front lines were around the crater area moving towards the east and the town of Thelus.



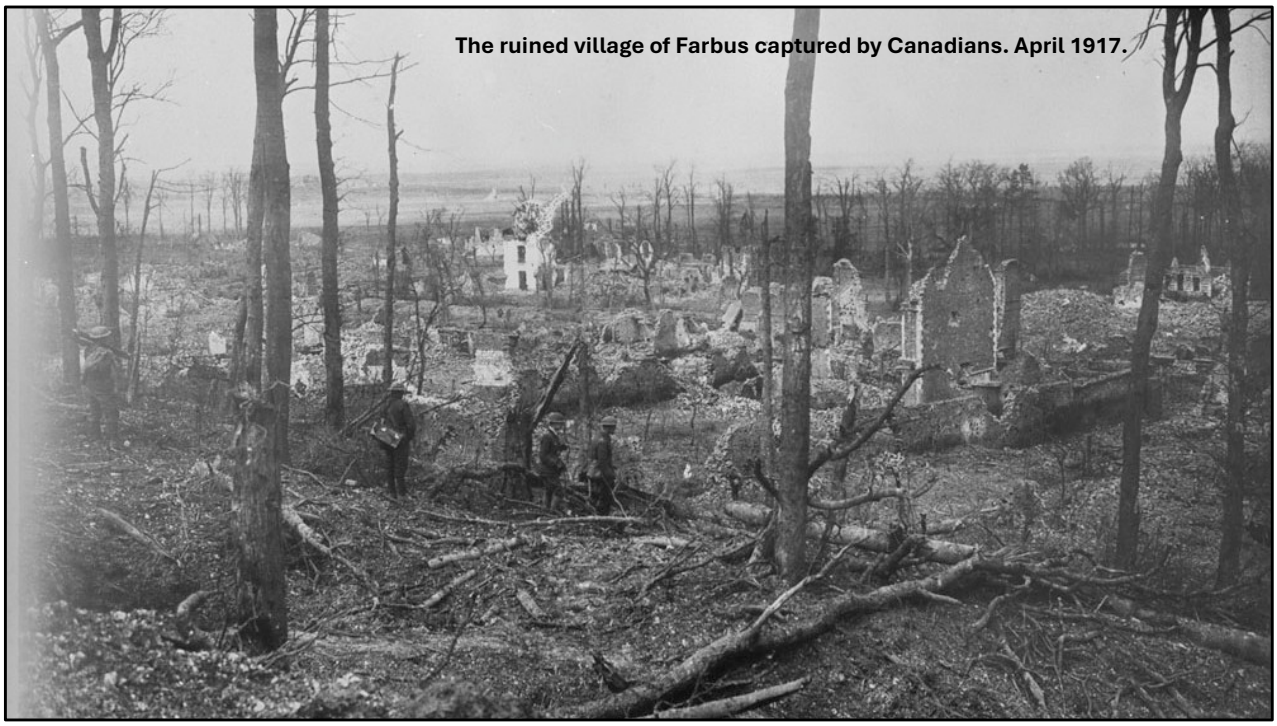
Modern Day Map

This Google Earth representation gives us a great idea of what the land is like now compared to what it was like during the First World War. It's quite a beautiful area and very rural and with lots of farmland and you can see Zivy Crater is just beside the road.

The other star representing farmers and this is roughly the area of operations for the 4th Canadian infantry brigade from the starting line being this heavy craters and then a black objectives being near Farbus.

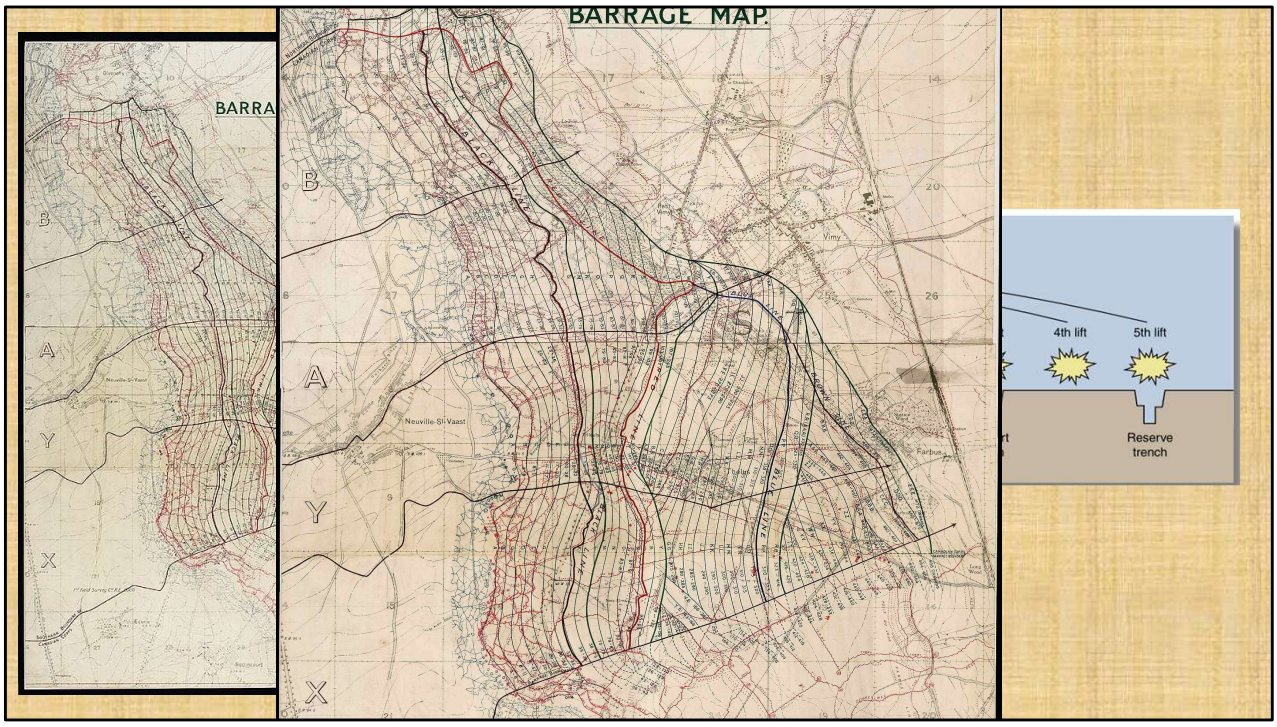
Overlay of German Trenches and Dugouts

Trench Names



The Ruined village of Farbus

And this image speaks to the destructions of the outcomes of war period the shelling destroyed the village completely and you can see how it's damaged the trees. And yet if you go there today unless you look hard it didn't appear to be any reminder of the conflict that occurred during the war. Certainly, there's lots of evidence available if you look and certainly there are items related to the conflict that can be found even today.

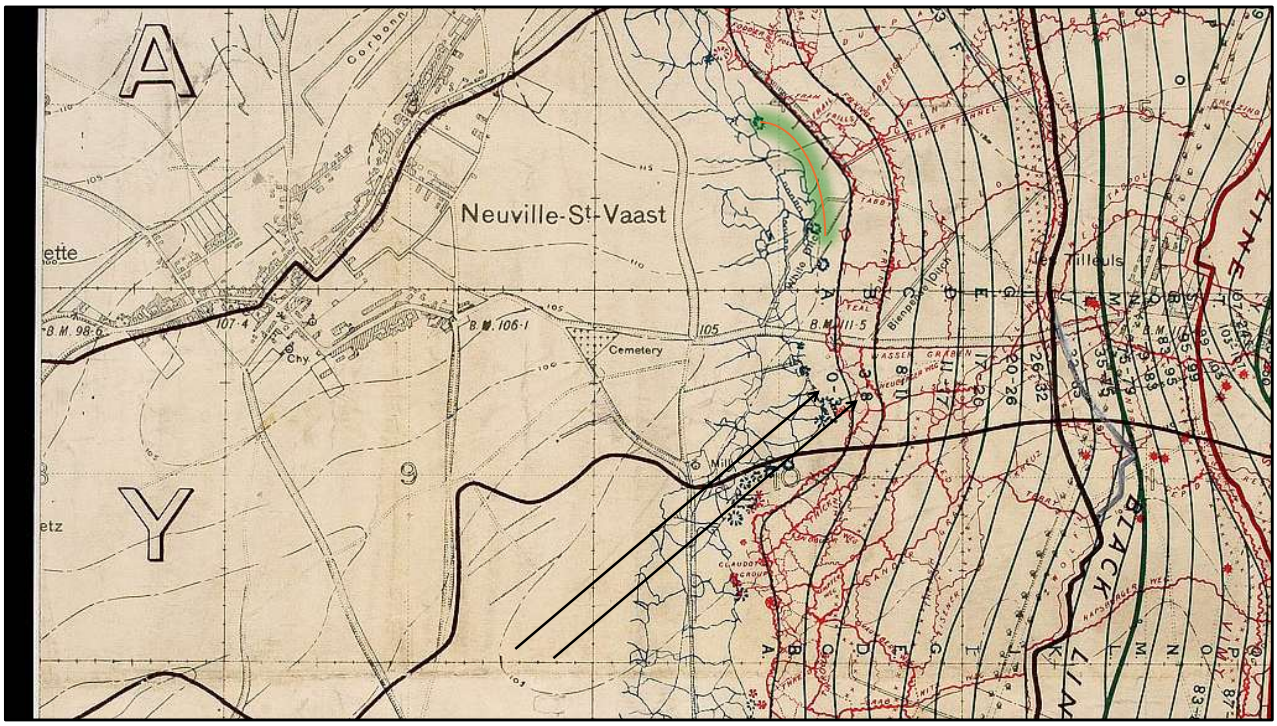


Artillery

on the left side of this slide, you will notice the barrage map this map is an excellent representation of the battle space. You knows at the North End the battlefield is not as deep as it is on the South end. And each of those parallel lines indicates A barrage lift. If you take a look at the right image, you can see simple representation of what a barrage lift is. The artillery would fire at a specific set of coordinates for a certain amount of time such as the first enemy trench and then after three minutes it would lift and proceed to the next line and so on. The idea was for the infantry to bear hard against the barrage and get as close as possible in order to realize the effectiveness of the garage. The garage is goal was to kill and wound and suppress as many enemy soldiers as possible.

The next image is a close up of the barrage map and you can notice a light blue lines on the left side of the map and then red lines underlaid through the garage lift lines. He will notice that the barrage basically follows the contours of the German lines. And we will see this in more detail in a future slide.

Enough can't be said about the efforts of the Canadian and British artillery in preparation for this battle. 85% of all known German artillery had been damaged or destroyed an was not effective during the battle.



Close up of Barrage Map

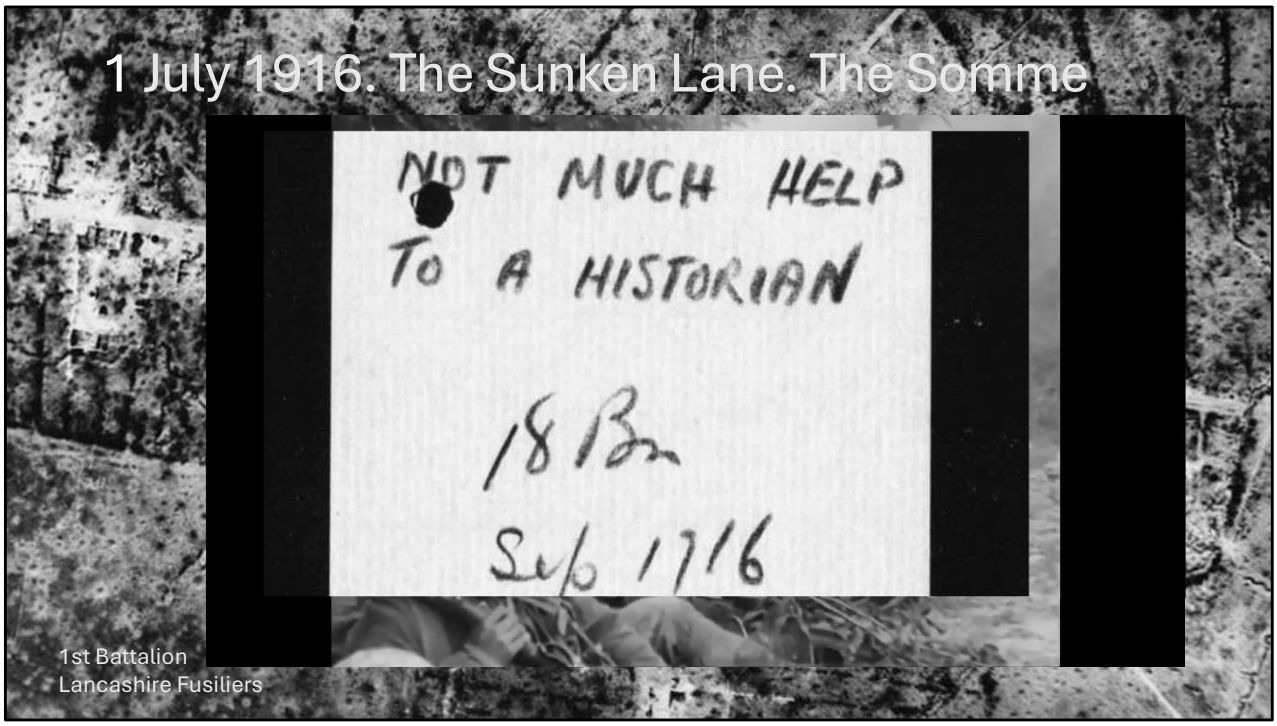
This image tightens on the area of interest. You'll notice the black line To the North and South of the village of Novell St. vast. That is the brigade boundary line and the fourth Canadian infantry brigade would have an axis of attack going from the West to the east. The blue lines represent the Canadian trenches and the red lines in represent the German trenches. Note the numbers 0-3 AN3-8. The first barrage will land on 0-3 and maintain the barrage for three minutes only on the front line of the German trenches. It was the infantry's job to advanced as close to the garage as possible and take the first trench. The second lift is from zero hour plus 3 minutes to 0 hour plus 8 minutes. And so on.

This map represents very clearly the frantic pace in which the infantry was expected to advance. And they were to stop for nothing. They were not to stop for the wounded, and they were not to stop for collecting prisoners and clearing dugouts that was the job of the 20th battalion. They were literally called the “moppers up”.

The Sharp End

The next series of slides will deal with the specifics of the Fourth Canadian Infantry Brigade and its role during the attack on Vimy.

This deals exclusively with the infantry portion of the attack. The 4th Canadian Machine Gun Company and 4th Canadian Trench Mortar Battery.



The Sunken Lane

For those of you who have not seen Peters Jacksons documentary called they shall not grow old I highly recommend that you watch this film. This is a segment I was made aware of watching the film and going to play it first and then make some commentary about it.

This is film of the first battalion of the Lancashire Fusilier's. This is taken on July 1st, 1916, at the opening of the battle of the psalms this movie shows the soldiers shortly before they were to go over the top. It's hard to tell in the short segment all the emotions that are being portrayed by these soldiers, but you can well imagine that some of them are downright scared and some of them are extremely nervous. Summer probably if displaying mock casualness towards the coming attack.

The takeaway is that the preparations for this battle were poorly done and a hard one lesson for the imperial forces. The Canadians would later be engaged in the Solomon September 1916 and the experience of all the battalions in the fourth Canadian infantry brigade was extremely harsh. Specifically in the case of the 18th Battalion, it was represented by the lack of information in its war diary. It's almost as if there was a collective need not to remember what had happened at the battle of Flers-Courcelette on the 15th of September 1916.

You can see by the quote it implies that there was 500 soldiers killed from the battalion with only 14 wounded. Typical ratio of killed in action to wood it is typically one man for every three to four soldiers that

were wounded. As can be grimly seen by this example that was not the case for the Lancashire Fusiliers.
“7 officers killed and 14 wounded, 156 Other ranks killed and 298 wounded with 11 missing presumed dead.”

To a great degree this wastage needed to be resolved by better tactics. The Canadians made such alterations, and these tactics came to maturity during the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Patches

In this is an image of the four patches that you would see representing Egypt of Italians from the 18th on the left 19th 20th and 21st battalions.

Structure of a Battalion

- War Establishment (1915)
  - 1150 offices and men

Fig. 1
Colt machine gun. Note its high profile, especially in the open training area in which these men are rehearsing. (Courtesy National Archives of Canada, PA4915)

- Rifle, Rifle Grenade and Grenade Sections
- 1 Lewis Gun per platoon

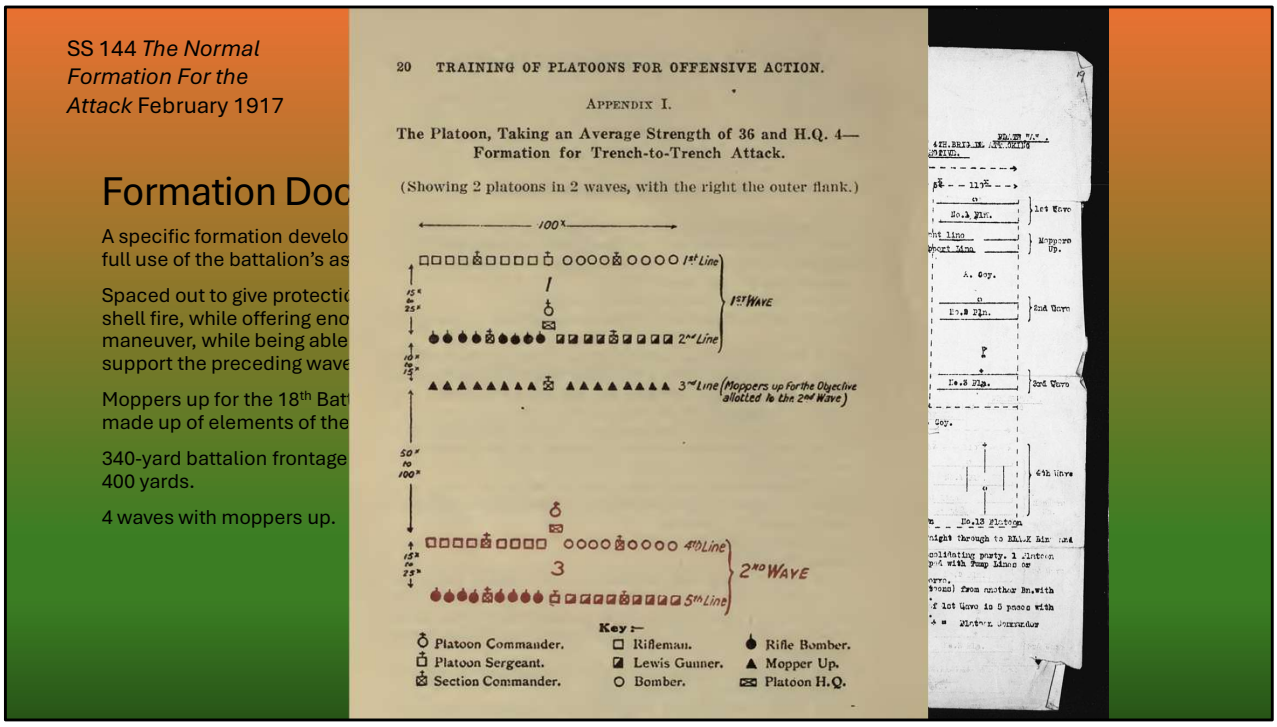
ength. Many operated with smaller companies.
ly "Left out of battle."

The structure and function of a battalion changed throughout the war and as we can see in 1915 the battalion was broken down into segments of specialists.

In 1917 from this extrapolation, it was a similar in size, but the Lewis gun sections had replaced the two machine Colt machine guns that were originally assigned to a Canadian Battalion. In 1917, the same company structure existed six officers and 220 one other ranks in four platoons and there was dedicated rifle and grenade sections within the platoons as well as Lewis gun sections which had 1 machine gun per platoon.

The advent of the Lewis gun was from the infantry perspective a game changer. It allowed the troops on the ground appropriate support against German strong points particularly other machine gun nests.

They certainly got the attention of their German counterparts.

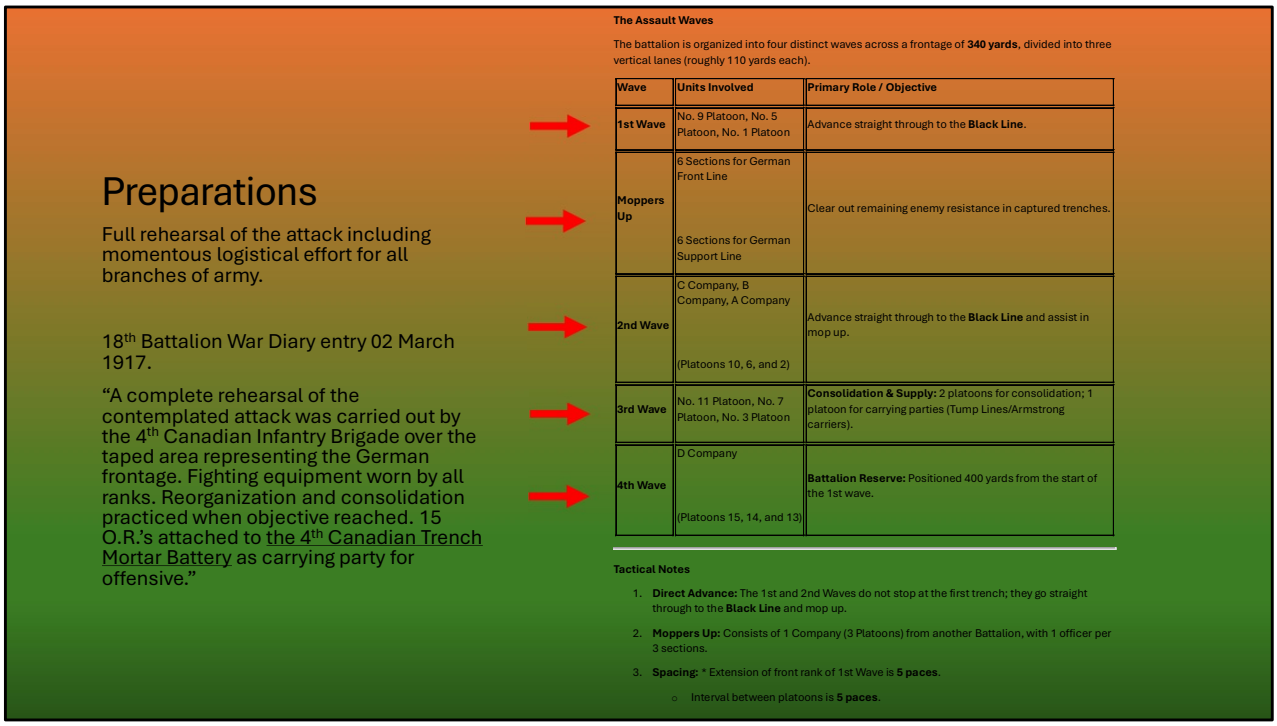


Formation Documentation

From the Fall of 1915 to March 1917 there is increasing effort to document the processes of a Brigade through orders, reports etc. This is represented in detail communication in a formal manner of battle plans and other aspects of warfare and show the maturation of the Canadian Corps being communicated institutionally.

This document actually is a representation of the formation of the soldiers as they prepare an begin their attack. They were spaced out to give protection from tell me direct fire weapons such as machine guns and rifles and also artillery. I was also design to establish a certain density of soldiers in order to effect engaging the German troops so that they could be defeated.

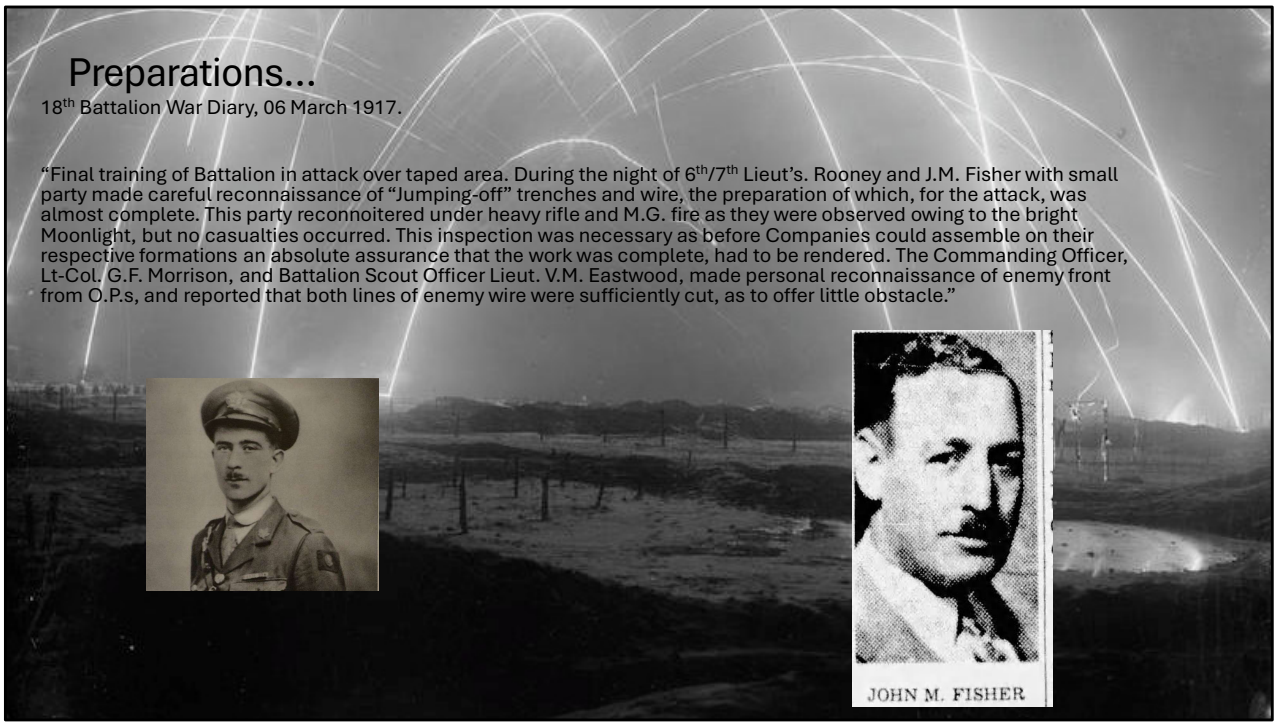
The 19th Battalion had a similar document.


Preparations
Full rehearsal of the attack including momentous logistical effort for all branches of army.
18th Battalion War Diary entry 02 March 1917.
"A complete rehearsal of the contemplated attack was carried out by the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade over the taped area representing the German frontage. Fighting equipment worn by all ranks. Reorganization and consolidation practiced when objective reached. 15 O.R.'s attached to the 4th Canadian Trench Mortar Battery as carrying party for offensive."
The Assault Waves
The battalion is organized into four distinct waves across a frontage of 340 yards, divided into three vertical lanes (roughly 110 yards each).
Wave
Units Involved
Primary Role / Objective
1st Wave
No. 9 Platoon, No. 5 Platoon, No. 1 Platoon
Advance straight through to the Black Line.
Moppers Up
6 Sections for German Front Line
6 Sections for German Support Line
Clear out remaining enemy resistance in captured trenches.
2nd Wave
C Company, B Company, A Company
(Platoons 10, 6, and 2)
Advance straight through to the Black Line and assist in mop up.
3rd Wave
No. 11 Platoon, No. 7 Platoon, No. 3 Platoon
Consolidation & Supply: 2 platoons for consolidation; 1 platoon for carrying parties (Tump Lines/Armstrong carriers).
4th Wave
D Company
(Platoons 15, 14, and 13)
Battalion Reserve: Positioned 400 yards from the start of the 1st wave.
Tactical Notes
1. Direct Advance: The 1st and 2nd Waves do not stop at the first trench; they go straight through to the Black Line and mop up.
2. Moppers Up: Consists of 1 Company (3 Platoons) from another Battalion, with 1 officer per 3 sections.
3. Spacing: * Extension of front rank of 1st Wave is 5 paces.
o Interval between platoons is 5 paces.

Preparations

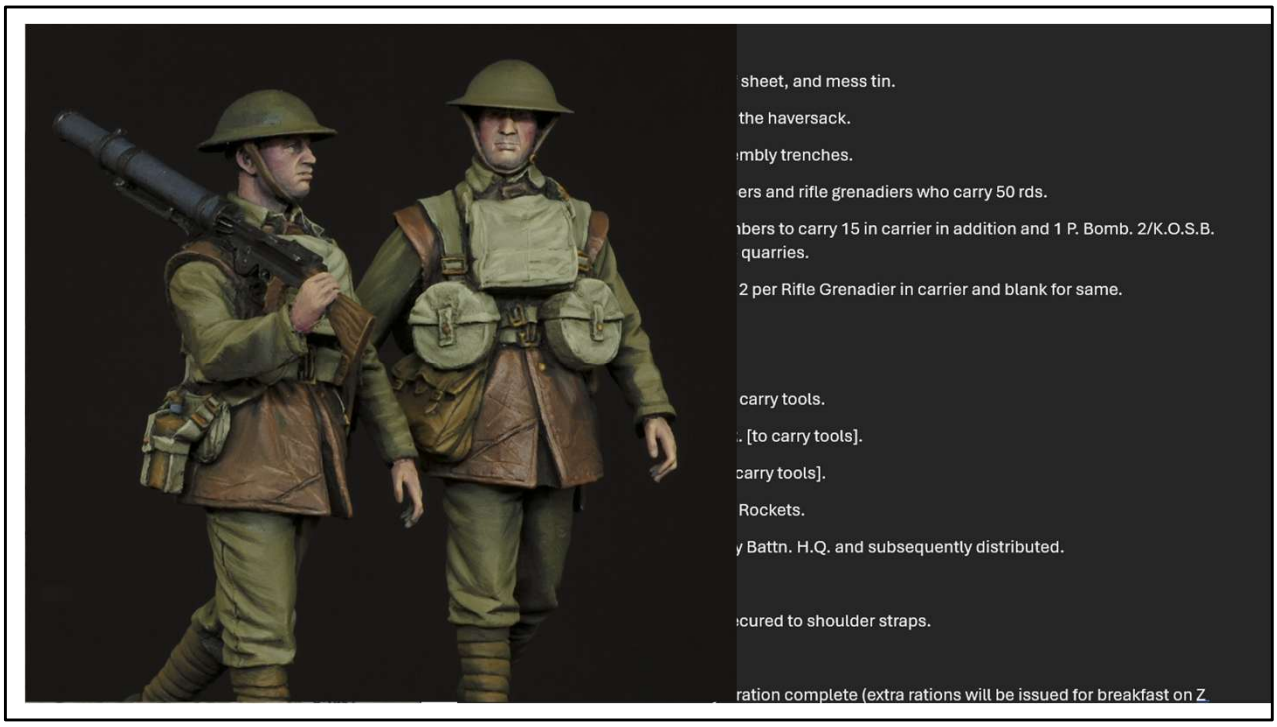
The preparations at the brigade level were extensive. There was an opportunity for the entire brigade to practice the attack. They would have outlined the major strong points and lines of resistance and mapped out the trenches. This is the communication trenches and the trenches used for defence. They would have represented the opportunity of combined arms communication with tanks being attached. There's a famous picture of the battlefield being represented in a skill that the officers and the men could look at the entire battlefield and learn by memory their roles for each of the objectives they were to take.

This is the first mention of the role of the moppers. Essentially people that would clear the dugouts in the trenches and collect prisoners and coordinate getting them returned to the rear area.


Preparations...
18th Battalion War Diary, 06 March 1917.
"Final training of Battalion in attack over taped area. During the night of 6th/7th Lieut's. Rooney and J.M. Fisher with small party made careful reconnaissance of "Jumping-off" trenches and wire, the preparation of which, for the attack, was almost complete. This party reconnoitered under heavy rifle and M.G. fire as they were observed owing to the bright Moonlight, but no casualties occurred. This inspection was necessary as before Companies could assemble on their respective formations an absolute assurance that the work was complete, had to be rendered. The Commanding Officer, Lt-Col. G.F. Morrison, and Battalion Scout Officer Lieut. V.M. Eastwood, made personal reconnaissance of enemy front from O.P.s, and reported that both lines of enemy wire were sufficiently cut, as to offer little obstacle."
JOHN M. FISHER

Preparations Continued

This is a quotation directly from the 18th battalion war diary for the 6th of April 1917. They sent two officers out to do a reconnaissance overnight and they did so at considerable risk. Also notice that the commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Morrison and the scout officer Lieutenant Eastwood both made reconnaissance in order to familiarize themselves with the battle ground and the area in which they would be fighting.


sheet, and mess tin.
the haversack.
mbly trenches.
ers and rifle grenadiers who carry 50 rds.
bers to carry 15 in carrier in addition and 1 P. Bomb. 2/K.O.S.B.
quarries.
2 per Rifle Grenadier in carrier and blank for same.
carry tools.
. [to carry tools].
carry tools].
Rockets.
y Battn. H.Q. and subsequently distributed.
cured to shoulder straps.
ration complete (extra rations will be issued for breakfast on Z

How do soldiers in the First World War dress? What equipment did they carry? These images help represent and allow us to visualize how they would dress but I particularly like the image in the centre this is the real world versus the ideal image of a soldier. He's smoking he's really dirty he probably hasn't had a change of underwear in a week, and he's probably changed his socks fairly frequently to prevent trench feet. He's probably looking forward to going back to the rear and having a communal bath with his members of the battalion. I wasn't much privacy during this war for these soldiers.

It was also delineated by roll so infantry carried more small arms ammunition and less grenades were his grenadiers carried more grenades and less ammunition.

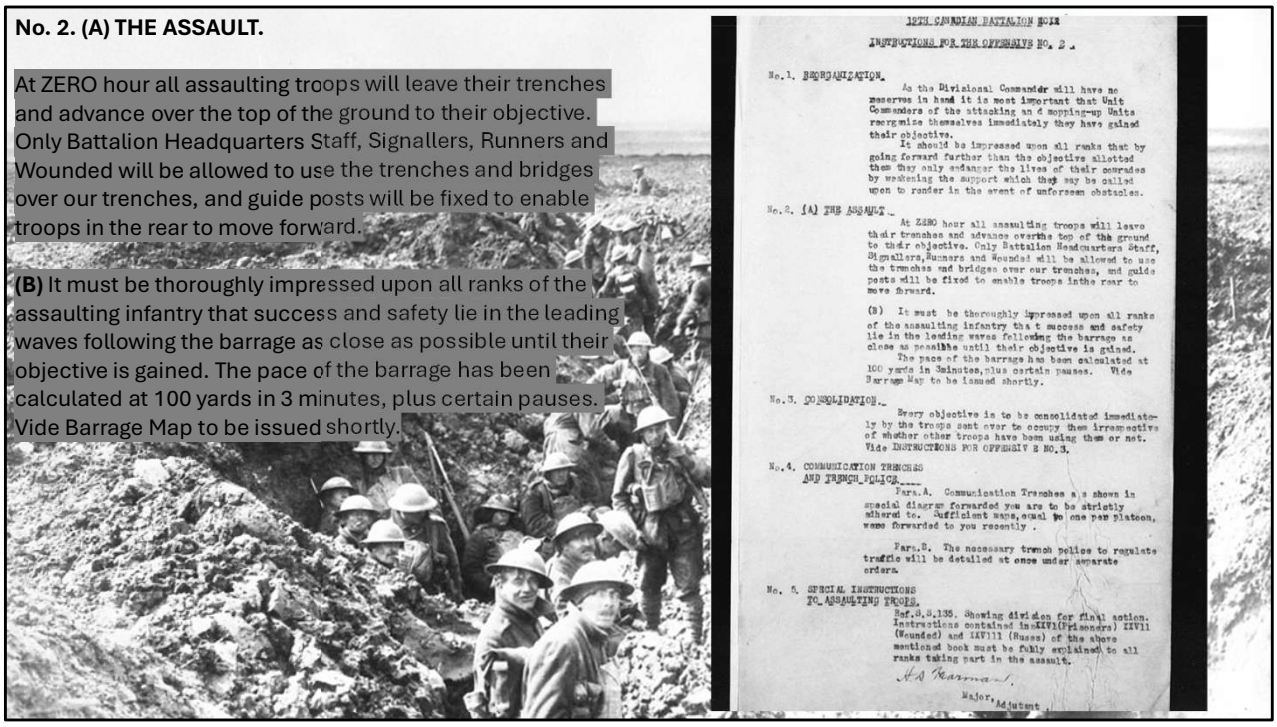
Review of Text...

Without the proper equipment and the logistical support allowing this to be completed properly before they attack the attack could potentially fail.

Take a moment to remember that video of the men of the 1st Lancashire's.

A similar experience was going through the minds of the thousands of soldiers of the Canadian Corps that morning as zero hour approached.

The range of emotions, thoughts, and prayers was unimaginable to us, now. For most of us here we could not and have not had to endure the tension of the moments before combat, when all efforts and energy coalesce into action.


No. 2. (A) THE ASSAULT.
At ZERO hour all assaulting troops will leave their trenches and advance over the top of the ground to their objective. Only Battalion Headquarters Staff, Signallers, Runners and Wounded will be allowed to use the trenches and bridges over our trenches, and guide posts will be fixed to enable troops in the rear to move forward.
(B) It must be thoroughly impressed upon all ranks of the assaulting infantry that success and safety lie in the leading waves following the barrage as close as possible until their objective is gained. The pace of the barrage has been calculated at 100 yards in 3 minutes, plus certain pauses. Vide Barrage Map to be issued shortly.
INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE OFFENSIVE NO. 2.
No.1. REORGANIZATION.
As the Divisional Commander will have no reserves in hand it is most important that Unit Commanders of the attacking and mopping-up Units reorganise themselves immediately they have gained their objective.
It should be impressed upon all ranks that by going forward further than the objective allotted them they only endanger the lives of their comrades by weakening the support which they may be called upon to render in the event of unforseen obstacles.
No.2. (A) THE ASSAULT.
At ZERO hour all assaulting troops will leave their trenches and advance overthe top of the ground to their objective. Only Battalion Headquarters Staff, Signallers, Runners and Wounded will be allowed to use the trenches and bridges over our trenches, and guide posts will be fixed to enable troops inthe rear to move forward.
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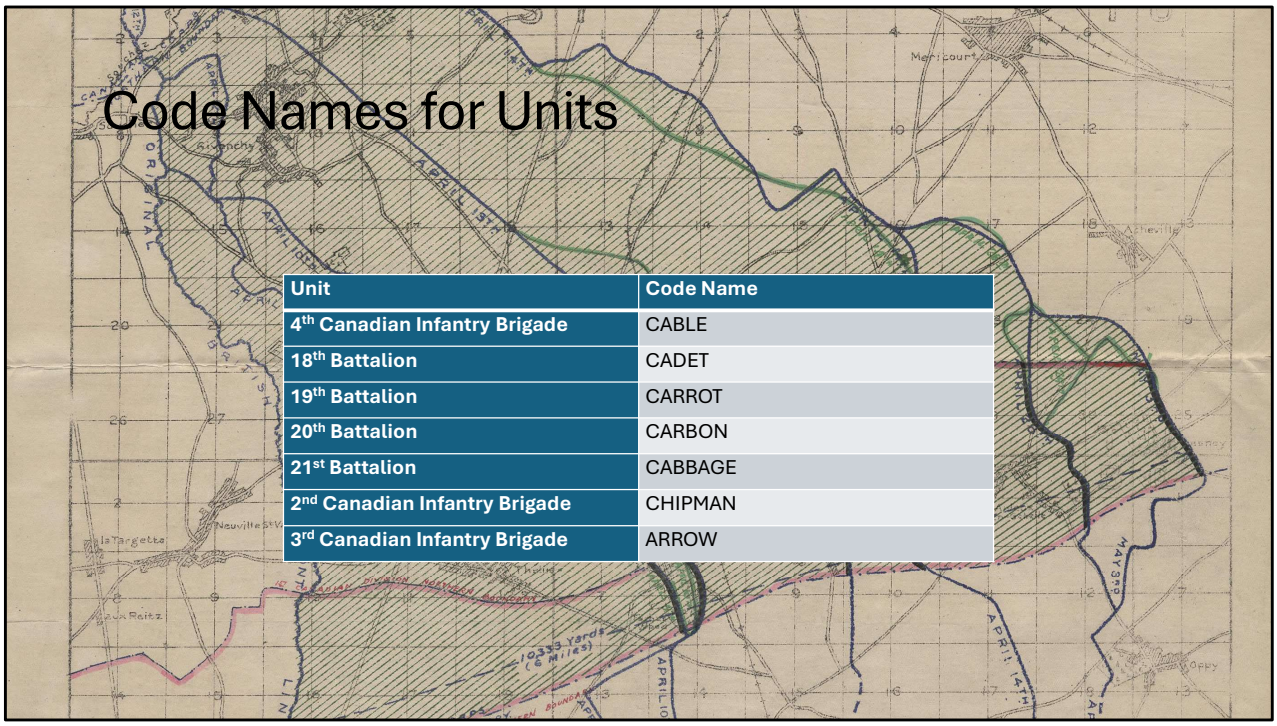
The pace of the barrage has been calculated at 100 yards in 3minutes,plus certain pauses. Vide Barrage Map to be issued shortly.
No.3. CONSOLIDATION.
Every objective is to be consolidated immediately by the troops sent over to occupy them irrespective of whether other troops have been using them or not.
Vide INSTRUCTIONS FOR OFFENSIV E NO.3.
No.4. COMMUNICATION TRENCHES AND TRENCH POLICE.
Para.A. Communication Trenches as shown in special diagram forwarded you are to be strictly adhered to. Sufficient maps,equal to one per platoon, were forwarded to you recently.
Para.B. The necessary trench police to regulate traffic will be detailed at once under separate orders.
No. 5. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO ASSAULTING TROOPS.
Ref.S.S.135. Showing division for final action. Instructions contained inXXVI(Prisoners) XXVII (Wounded) and XXVIII (Ruses) of the above mentioned book must be fully explained to all ranks taking part in the assault.
H.A Pearman
Major, Adjutant.

The Assault

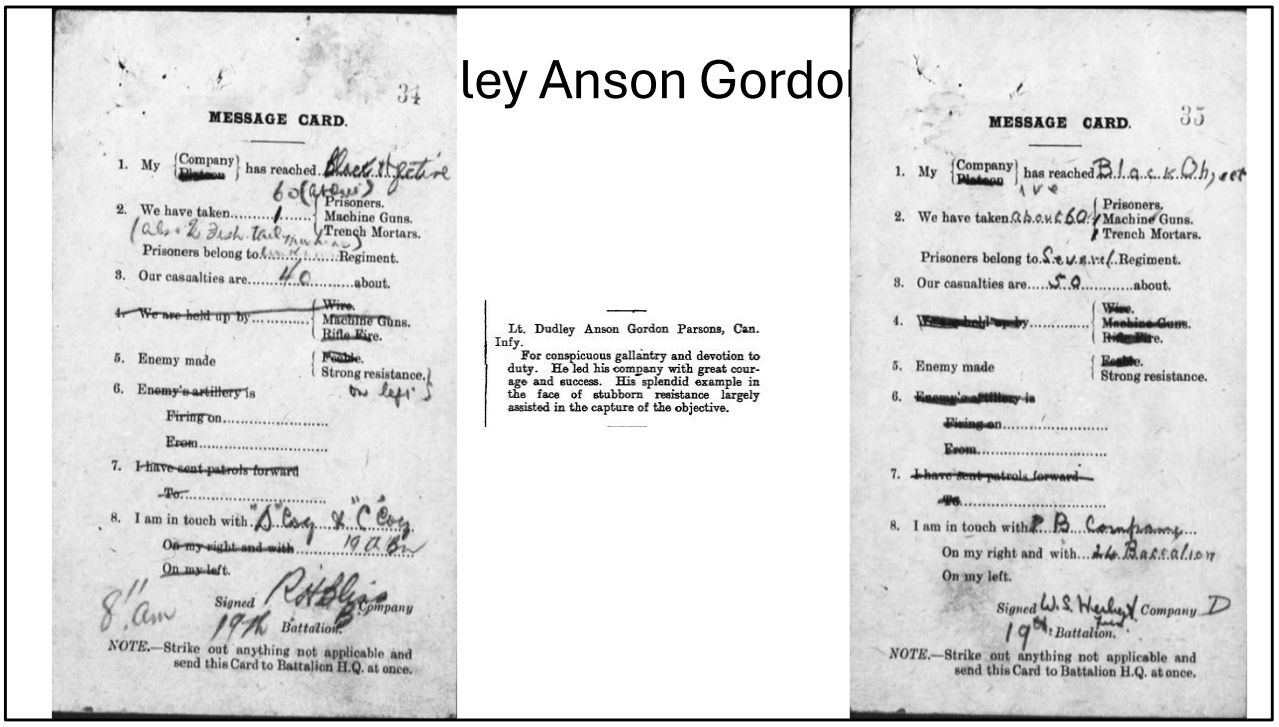
Each stage is defined in clear terms.

No. 5. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO ASSAULTING TROOPS. Ref. S.S. 135. Showing division for final action. Instructions contained in XXVI (Prisoners) XXVII (Wounded) and XXVIII (Ruses) of the above mentioned book must be fully explained to all ranks taking part in the assault.
(Signed) **H.A. Pearman.**



Code Names for Units

The 4th Canadian infantry brigade as well as all the other brigades of the Canadian core had code names in this case it's obvious C is a theme. We have cable cadet carat carbon cabbage an chipman and then arrow and these code names were used diligently in the communications between the units. We will see some examples of that in the next few slides.



34

MESSAGE CARD.

1. My {Company / ~~Platoon~~} has reached Black Objective
2. We have taken 60 (sixty) Prisoners. / 1 Machine Guns. / (2 Trench Mortars.) Trench Mortars.
   Prisoners belong to [illegible] Regiment.
3. Our casualties are 40 about.
4. ~~We are held up by~~ Wire. / Machine Guns. / Rifle Fire.
5. Enemy made ~~Feeble~~. / Strong resistance.
6. ~~Enemy's artillery is~~ on left
   ~~Firing on~~
   ~~From~~
7. ~~I have sent patrols forward~~
   ~~To~~
8. I am in touch with B Coy & C Coy
   ~~On my right and with~~ 19 a Bn
   ~~On my left.~~

8" am

Signed Robt Blair Company
19th Battalion.

NOTE.—Strike out anything not applicable and send this Card to Battalion H.Q. at once.

ley Anson Gordo

Lt. Dudley Anson Gordon Parsons, Can. Infy.

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He led his company with great courage and success. His splendid example in the face of stubborn resistance largely assisted in the capture of the objective.

35

MESSAGE CARD.

1. My {Company / ~~Platoon~~} has reached Black Objective
2. We have taken about 60 Prisoners. / Machine Guns. / Trench Mortars.
   Prisoners belong to Several Regiment.
3. Our casualties are 50 about.
4. ~~We are held up by~~ Wire. / ~~Machine Guns.~~ / ~~Rifle Fire.~~
5. Enemy made ~~Feeble~~. / Strong resistance.
6. ~~Enemy's artillery is~~
   ~~Firing on~~
   ~~From~~
7. ~~I have sent patrols forward~~
   ~~To~~
8. I am in touch with B Company
   On my right and with 4th Battalion
   On my left.

Signed W.S. Hedley Company D
19th Battalion.

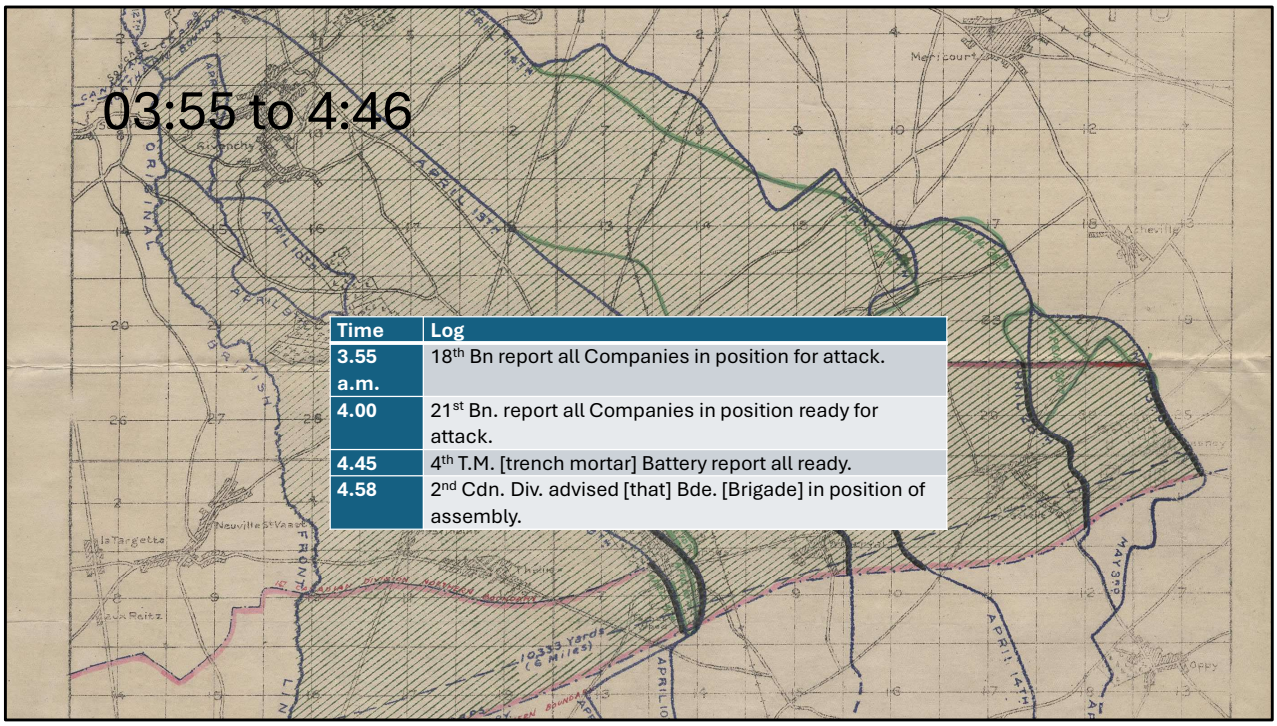
NOTE.—Strike out anything not applicable and send this Card to Battalion H.Q. at once.

Lt. Parsons

The communication method was initially quite rudimentary. It was using runners and slips of paper, and this is a sample of an actual message written by Lieutenant Parsons during the battle.

The role of the runner was essential in keeping communications as the elements of each battalion was not able to use telephone communication for some time after the start of the battle. Logistically just took a long time to string and prepare the infrastructure to use telephones and the wireless was not a standard use item at this time at the battalion level to my knowledge.

The next couple slides are representations of the communications, and I will take the opportunity to mention specific items in the communications.



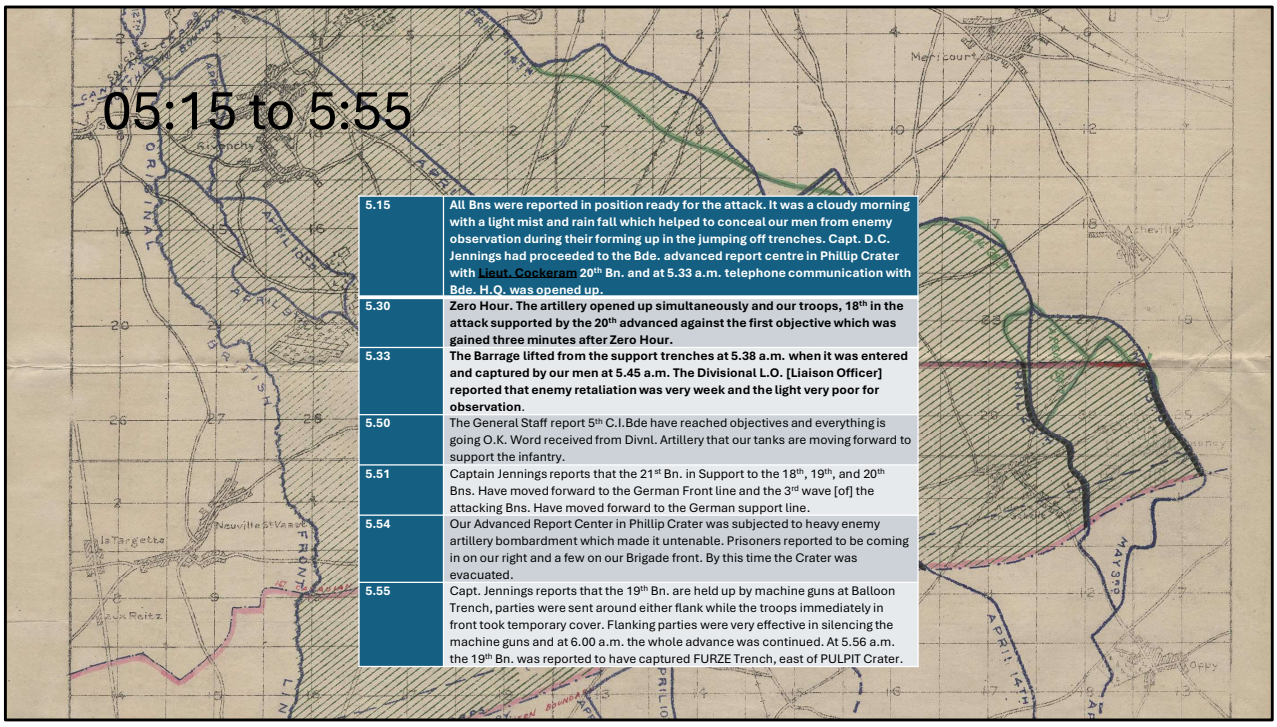
Time	Log
3.55 a.m.	18th Bn report all Companies in position for attack.
4.00	21st Bn. report all Companies in position ready for attack.
4.45	4th T.M. [trench mortar] Battery report all ready.
4.58	2nd Cdn. Div. advised [that] Bde. [Brigade] in position of assembly.

03:55 – 4:46

Following are transcriptions taken from an appendix that was part of the fourth Canadian infantry brigade war diary.

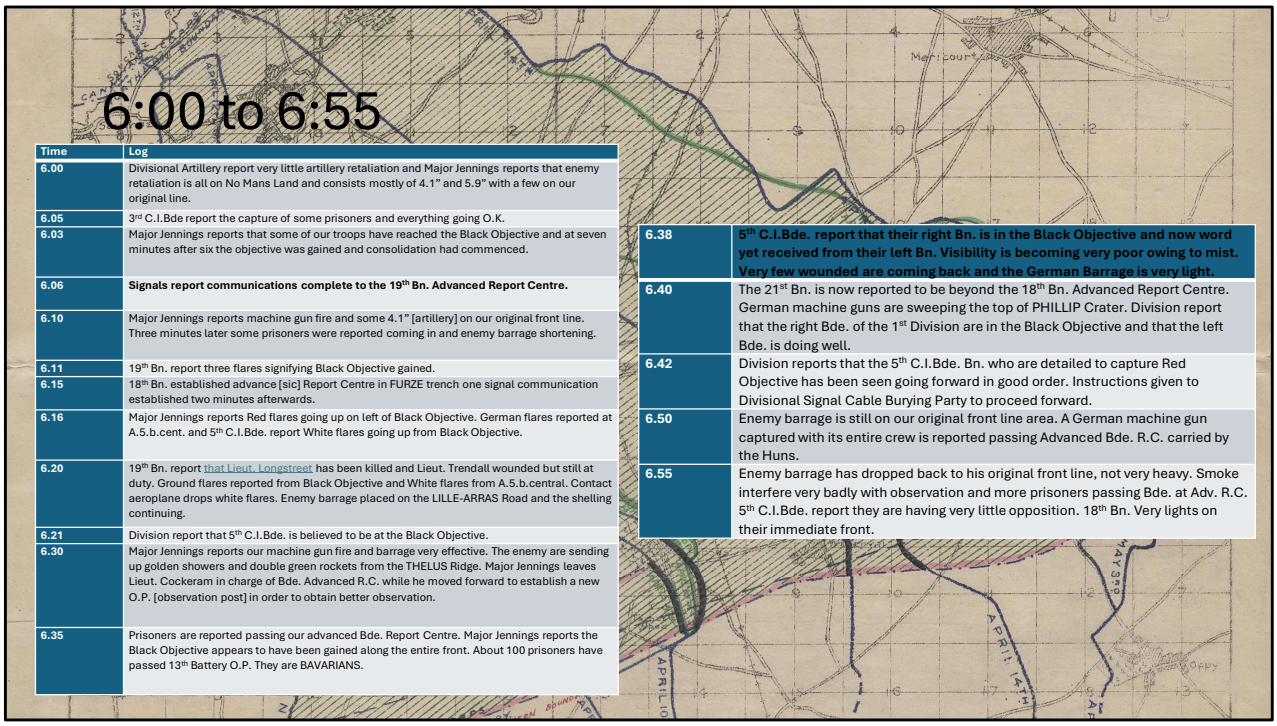
In it it takes an account of the messages that are coming in bound to the headquarters.

I have segmented them by time so that they are related with each other and you can see this first group of messages are basically saying that the battalions are ready and are expecting to go forward when zero hour arrives


05:15 to 5:55
5.15 All Bns were reported in position ready for the attack. It was a cloudy morning with a light mist and rain fall which helped to conceal our men from enemy observation during their forming up in the jumping off trenches. Capt. D.C. Jennings had proceeded to the Bde. advanced report centre in Phillip Crater with Lieut. Cockeram 20th Bn. and at 5.33 a.m. telephone communication with Bde. H.Q. was opened up.
5.30 Zero Hour. The artillery opened up simultaneously and our troops, 18th in the attack supported by the 20th advanced against the first objective which was gained three minutes after Zero Hour.
5.33 The Barrage lifted from the support trenches at 5.38 a.m. when it was entered and captured by our men at 5.45 a.m. The Divisional L.O. [Liaison Officer] reported that enemy retaliation was very week and the light very poor for observation.
5.50 The General Staff report 5th C.I.Bde have reached objectives and everything is going O.K. Word received from Divnl. Artillery that our tanks are moving forward to support the infantry.
5.51 Captain Jennings reports that the 21st Bn. in Support to the 18th, 19th, and 20th Bns. Have moved forward to the German Front line and the 3rd wave [of] the attacking Bns. Have moved forward to the German support line.
5.54 Our Advanced Report Center in Phillip Crater was subjected to heavy enemy artillery bombardment which made it untenable. Prisoners reported to be coming in on our right and a few on our Brigade front. By this time the Crater was evacuated.
5.55 Capt. Jennings reports that the 19th Bn. are held up by machine guns at Balloon Trench, parties were sent around either flank while the troops immediately in front took temporary cover. Flanking parties were very effective in silencing the machine guns and at 6.00 a.m. the whole advance was continued. At 5.56 a.m. the 19th Bn. was reported to have captured FURZE Trench, east of PULPIT Crater.

05:15 to 5:55

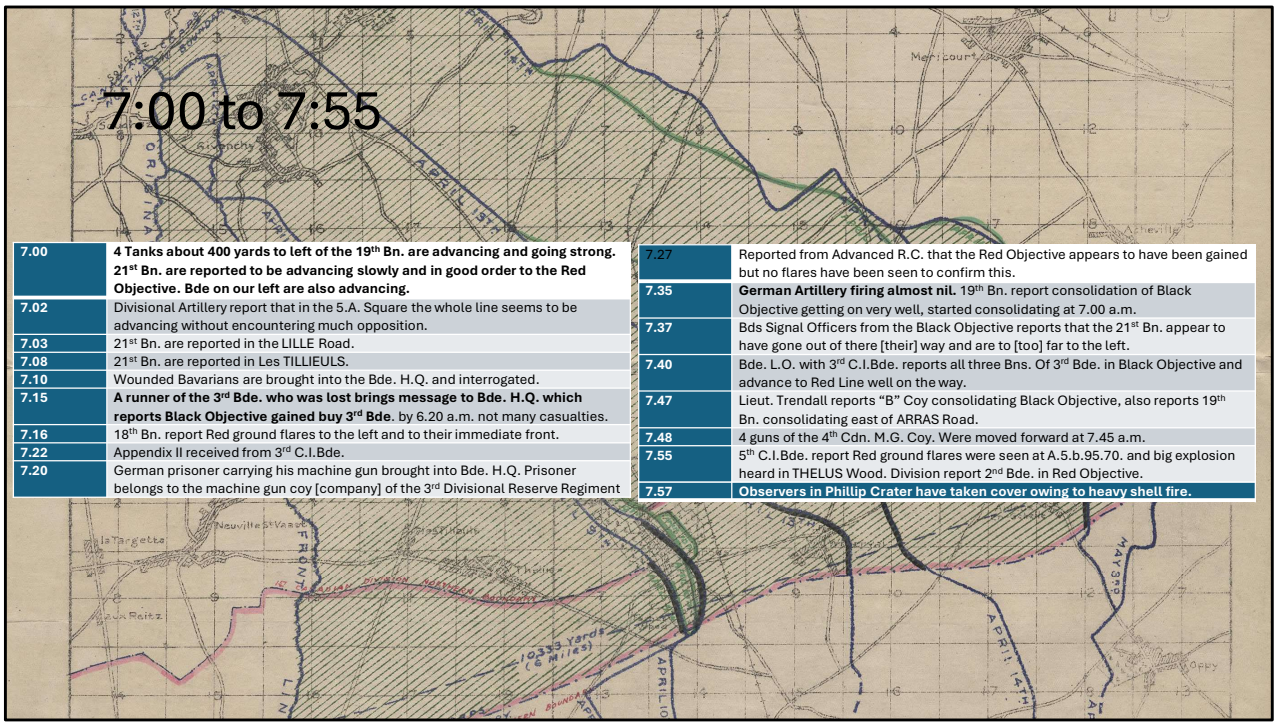
In this case we have a good illustration of what was being recorded and at 5:30 zero hour occurred with the artillery starting its barrage with the predetermined timed lifts. 18th and 19th battalions began their attack and then you can notice that they record the brigade advancing as the artillery was lifting. A series of action reports come in from the advance reporting centre sharing information about prisoners being taken and how specific progress is being made and any signs of resistance are being met.



Time	Log
6.00	Divisional Artillery report very little artillery retaliation and Major Jennings reports that enemy retaliation is all on No Mans Land and consists mostly of 4.1" and 5.9" with a few on our original line.
6.05	3rd C.I.Bde report the capture of some prisoners and everything going O.K.
6.03	Major Jennings reports that some of our troops have reached the Black Objective and at seven minutes after six the objective was gained and consolidation had commenced.
6.06	**Signals report communications complete to the 19th Bn. Advanced Report Centre.**
6.10	Major Jennings reports machine gun fire and some 4.1" [artillery] on our original front line. Three minutes later some prisoners were reported coming in and enemy barrage shortening.
6.11	19th Bn. report three flares signifying Black Objective gained.
6.15	18th Bn. established advance [sic] Report Centre in FURZE trench one signal communication established two minutes afterwards.
6.16	Major Jennings reports Red flares going up on left of Black Objective. German flares reported at A.5.b.cent. and 5th C.I.Bde. report White flares going up from Black Objective.
6.20	19th Bn. report that Lieut. Longstreet has been killed and Lieut. Trendall wounded but still at duty. Ground flares reported from Black Objective and White flares from A.5.b.central. Contact aeroplane drops white flares. Enemy barrage placed on the LILLE-ARRAS Road and the shelling continuing.
6.21	Division report that 5th C.I.Bde. is believed to be at the Black Objective.
6.30	Major Jennings reports our machine gun fire and barrage very effective. The enemy are sending up golden showers and double green rockets from the THELUS Ridge. Major Jennings leaves Lieut. Cockeram in charge of Bde. Advanced R.C. while he moved forward to establish a new O.P. [observation post] in order to obtain better observation.
6.35	Prisoners are reported passing our advanced Bde. Report Centre. Major Jennings reports the Black Objective appears to have been gained along the entire front. About 100 prisoners have passed 13th Battery O.P. They are BAVARIANS.
6.38	**5th C.I.Bde. report that their right Bn. is in the Black Objective and now word yet received from their left Bn. Visibility is becoming very poor owing to mist. Very few wounded are coming back and the German Barrage is very light.**
6.40	The 21st Bn. is now reported to be beyond the 18th Bn. Advanced Report Centre. German machine guns are sweeping the top of PHILLIP Crater. Division report that the right Bde. of the 1st Division are in the Black Objective and that the left Bde. is doing well.
6.42	Division reports that the 5th C.I.Bde. Bn. who are detailed to capture Red Objective has been seen going forward in good order. Instructions given to Divisional Signal Cable Burying Party to proceed forward.
6.50	Enemy barrage is still on our original front line area. A German machine gun captured with its entire crew is reported passing Advanced Bde. R.C. carried by the Huns.
6.55	Enemy barrage has dropped back to his original front line, not very heavy. Smoke interfere very badly with observation and more prisoners passing Bde. at Adv. R.C. 5th C.I.Bde. report they are having very little opposition. 18th Bn. Very lights on their immediate front.

6:00 to 6:55

The next hour was very busy. You can see that information is being communicated frequently and not sporadically the reports are coming in from the runners with those message chats or verbal messages. And even as early as 635 prisoners were being reported to be in sent back to the rear lines.
At 6:50 and 6:55 are reports about the enemy artillery fire. And luckily due to the work that was done by the artillery the German fire is relatively sparse and ineffective.


7:00 to 7:55
7.00 4 Tanks about 400 yards to left of the 19th Bn. are advancing and going strong. 21st Bn. are reported to be advancing slowly and in good order to the Red Objective. Bde on our left are also advancing.
7.02 Divisional Artillery report that in the 5.A. Square the whole line seems to be advancing without encountering much opposition.
7.03 21st Bn. are reported in the LILLE Road.
7.08 21st Bn. are reported in Les TILLIEULS.
7.10 Wounded Bavarians are brought into the Bde. H.Q. and interrogated.
7.15 A runner of the 3rd Bde. who was lost brings message to Bde. H.Q. which reports Black Objective gained buy 3rd Bde. by 6.20 a.m. not many casualties.
7.16 18th Bn. report Red ground flares to the left and to their immediate front.
7.22 Appendix II received from 3rd C.I.Bde.
7.20 German prisoner carrying his machine gun brought into Bde. H.Q. Prisoner belongs to the machine gun coy [company] of the 3rd Divisional Reserve Regiment
7.27 Reported from Advanced R.C. that the Red Objective appears to have been gained but no flares have been seen to confirm this.
7.35 German Artillery firing almost nil. 19th Bn. report consolidation of Black Objective getting on very well, started consolidating at 7.00 a.m.
7.37 Bds Signal Officers from the Black Objective reports that the 21st Bn. appear to have gone out of there [their] way and are to [too] far to the left.
7.40 Bde. L.O. with 3rd C.I.Bde. reports all three Bns. Of 3rd Bde. in Black Objective and advance to Red Line well on the way.
7.47 Lieut. Trendall reports "B" Coy consolidating Black Objective, also reports 19th Bn. consolidating east of ARRAS Road.
7.48 4 guns of the 4th Cdn. M.G. Coy. Were moved forward at 7.45 a.m.
7.55 5th C.I.Bde. report Red ground flares were seen at A.5.b.95.70. and big explosion heard in THELUS Wood. Division report 2nd Bde. in Red Objective.
7.57 Observers in Phillip Crater have taken cover owing to heavy shell fire.

7:00 to 7:55

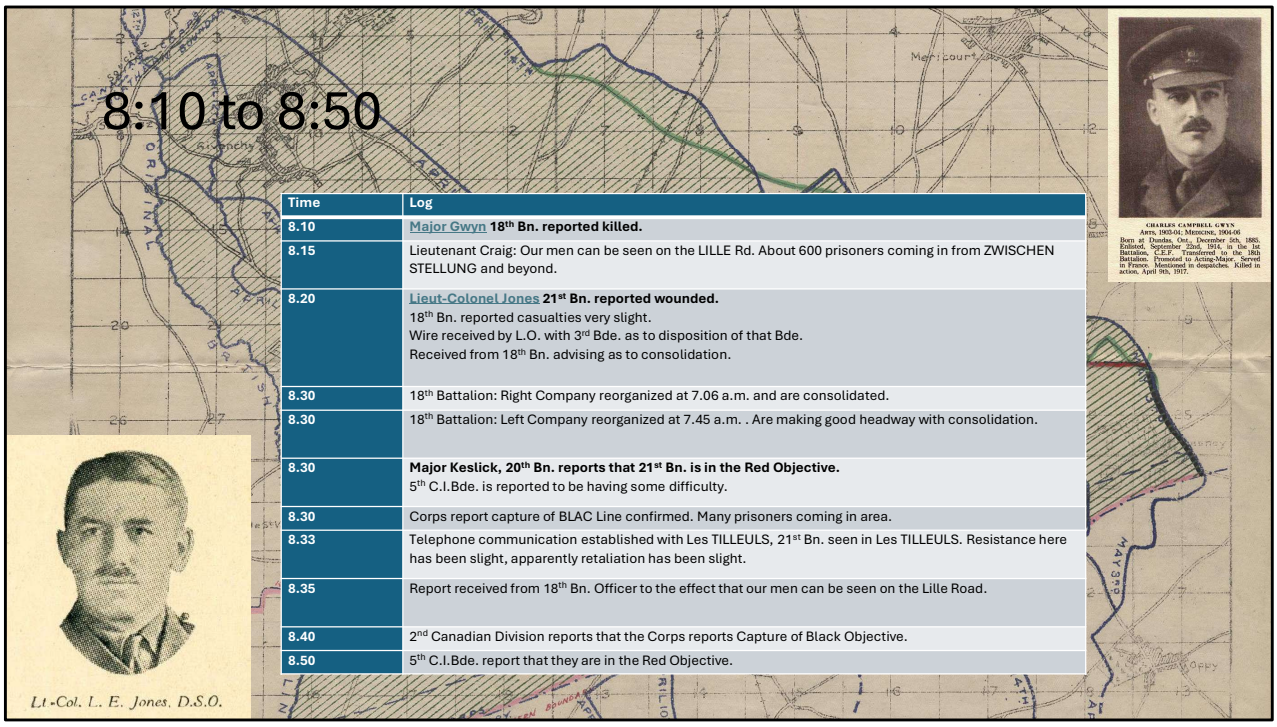
Times of note are from 7:00 to 7:55 AM.

The 1st is mention of the tanks tasked with supporting the attack are made at 7:00 and their position in relation to the 19th Battalion is indicated.

The rate of advance for the 19th of the 21st battalions is noted.

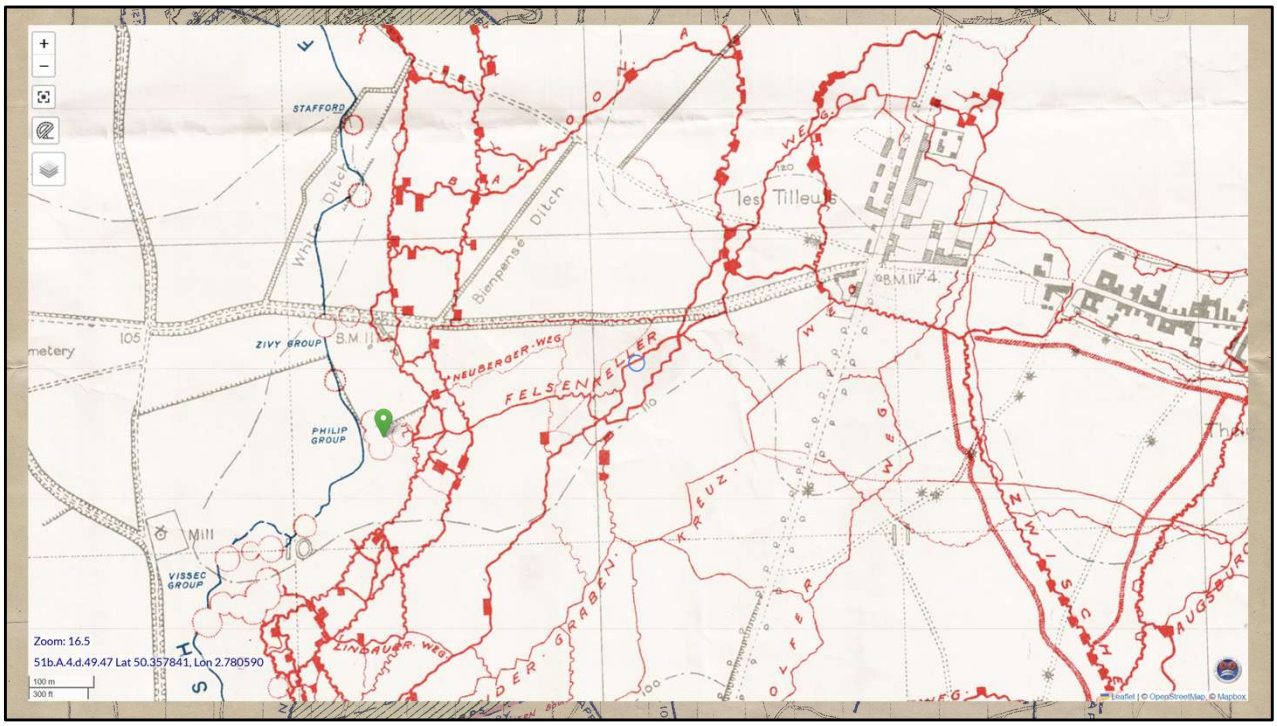
The next entry that is interesting is the fact that a third brigade runner has gotten completely lost and ended up at the 4th brigade reporting centre or headquarters and dropped off a message for them. This gives you an idea of the confusion of battle and even a soldier that was familiar with the battle space could become lost very easily do too fog haze and just the overall environment of a battle going on.

A report at 7:35 that German artillery firing is almost nonexistent. This must have been a significant improvement to the experiences had in previous battles. The Canadian soldiers were able to advance and then do their consolidation of their positions and preparations for a German counter attack.


8:10 to 8:50
Time
Log
8.10
Major Gwyn 18th Bn. reported killed.
8.15
Lieutenant Craig: Our men can be seen on the LILLE Rd. About 600 prisoners coming in from ZWISCHEN STELLUNG and beyond.
8.20
Lieut-Colonel Jones 21st Bn. reported wounded.
18th Bn. reported casualties very slight.
Wire received by L.O. with 3rd Bde. as to disposition of that Bde.
Received from 18th Bn. advising as to consolidation.
8.30
18th Battalion: Right Company reorganized at 7.06 a.m. and are consolidated.
8.30
18th Battalion: Left Company reorganized at 7.45 a.m. . Are making good headway with consolidation.
8.30
Major Keslick, 20th Bn. reports that 21st Bn. is in the Red Objective.
5th C.I.Bde. is reported to be having some difficulty.
8.30
Corps report capture of BLAC Line confirmed. Many prisoners coming in area.
8.33
Telephone communication established with Les TILLEULS, 21st Bn. seen in Les TILLEULS. Resistance here has been slight, apparently retaliation has been slight.
8.35
Report received from 18th Bn. Officer to the effect that our men can be seen on the Lille Road.
8.40
2nd Canadian Division reports that the Corps reports Capture of Black Objective.
8.50
5th C.I.Bde. report that they are in the Red Objective.
Lt.-Col. L. E. Jones, D.S.O.
CHARLES CAMPBELL GWYN

The next hour from 8:00 to 08:50 AM has a few entries and of note are the report of Major Gwin from the 18th battalion being killed and the commanding officer of the 21st Battalion Lieutenant Colonel Jones being wounded in action.

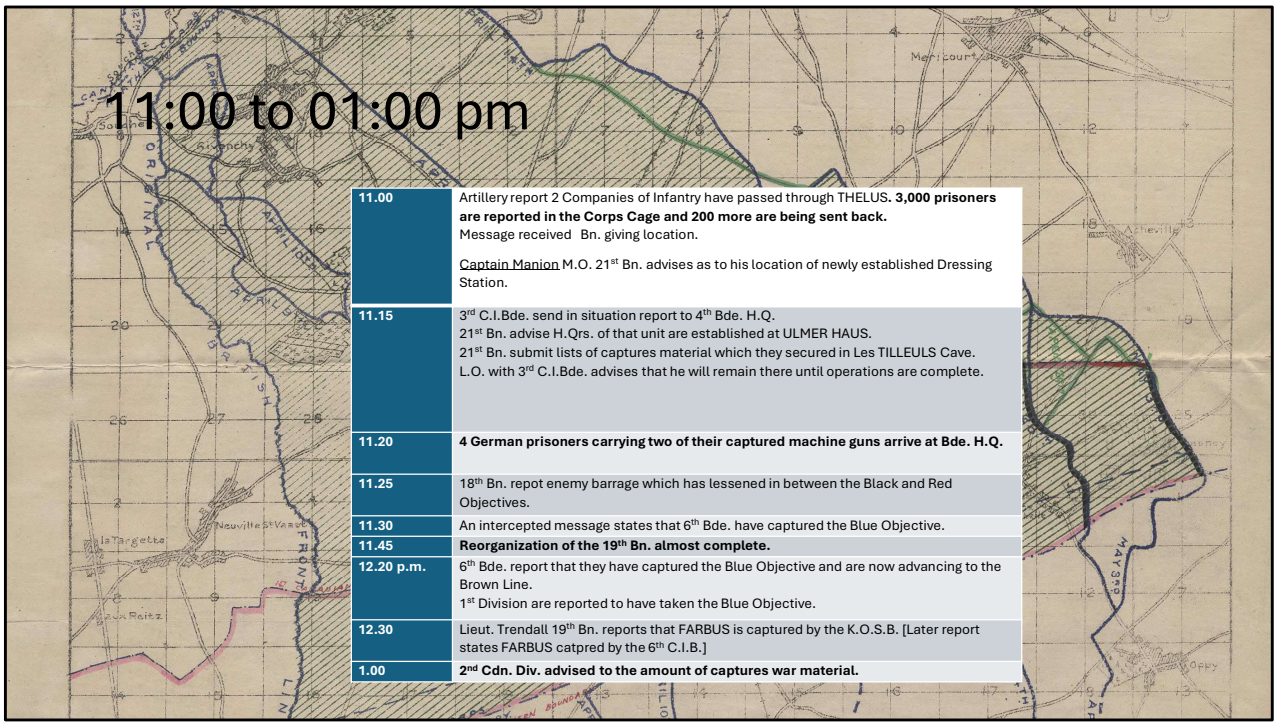
There are also mention of the important act of consolidation it and a particular note is at 8:40 AM on this day the second Canadian division reports to the core that they've captured the black objective.



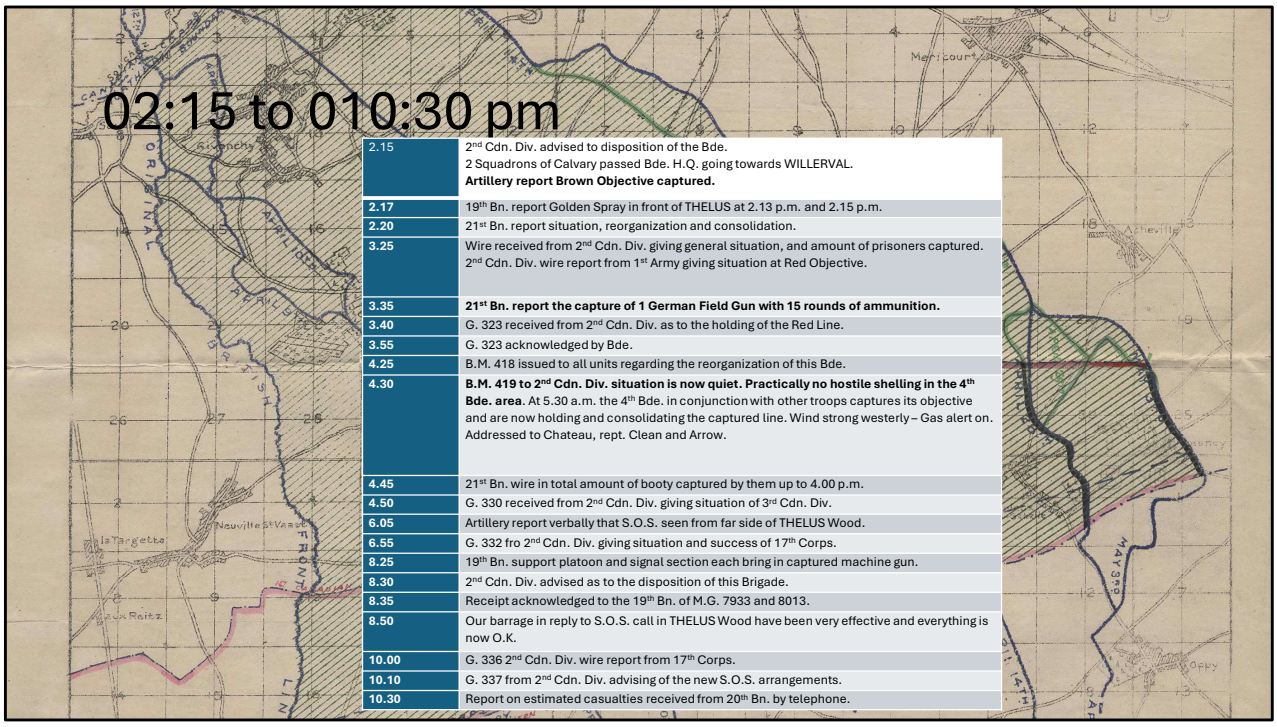
The amount of reporting coming into the reporting centre has decreased as the battle has stabilized and the consolidation continues and no significant German activity such as a counterattack occurs.

At 9:05 it reports 2 tanks or stuck in the mud. Indicative of the conditions of the battle ground. This would be a constant issue throughout the war for the tanks when they were fighting and conditions that were similar to that of Vimy Ridge.

Another officer this time from the 19th battalion has been killed. And it reports a number of other lieutenants being killed in action. It also gives the opportunity to report that up until 10:20 the 19th battalion has suffered approximately 185 casualties but does not discern between those that were killed in action and those that are wound did.

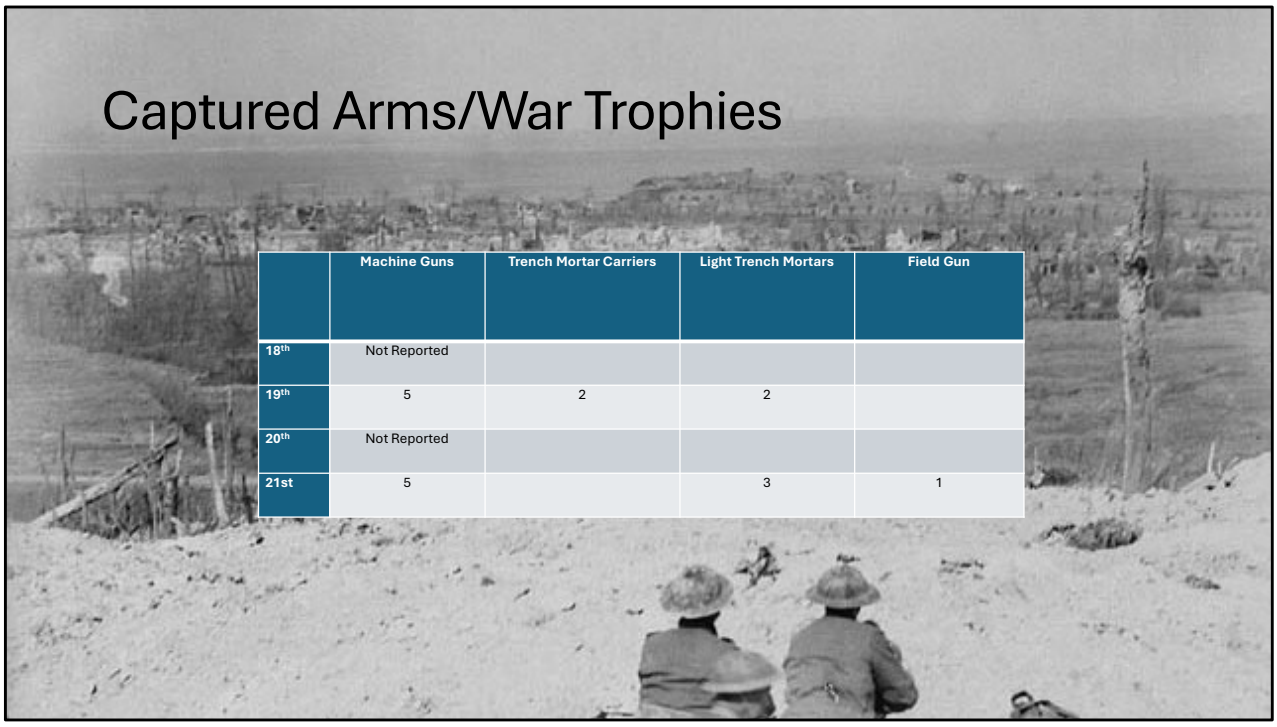

11:00 to 01:00 pm
11.00
Artillery report 2 Companies of Infantry have passed through THELUS. 3,000 prisoners are reported in the Corps Cage and 200 more are being sent back.
Message received Bn. giving location.
Captain Manion M.O. 21st Bn. advises as to his location of newly established Dressing Station.
11.15
3rd C.I.Bde. send in situation report to 4th Bde. H.Q.
21st Bn. advise H.Qrs. of that unit are established at ULMER HAUS.
21st Bn. submit lists of captures material which they secured in Les TILLEULS Cave.
L.O. with 3rd C.I.Bde. advises that he will remain there until operations are complete.
11.20
4 German prisoners carrying two of their captured machine guns arrive at Bde. H.Q.
11.25
18th Bn. repot enemy barrage which has lessened in between the Black and Red Objectives.
11.30
An intercepted message states that 6th Bde. have captured the Blue Objective.
11.45
Reorganization of the 19th Bn. almost complete.
12.20 p.m.
6th Bde. report that they have captured the Blue Objective and are now advancing to the Brown Line.
1st Division are reported to have taken the Blue Objective.
12.30
Lieut. Trendall 19th Bn. reports that FARBUS is captured by the K.O.S.B. [Later report states FARBUS catpred by the 6th C.I.B.]
1.00
2nd Cdn. Div. advised to the amount of captures war material.

The message activity has decreased even more period from 11:00 to 1:00 there are 10 messages. These messages are almost like housekeeping now. The battle space inside the 4th Canadian brigade area of operations has stabilized and they are receiving information about the progress of the battle from other units. Of note is that the 6th CIB brigade has passed through the 4th Brigade achieiving the capture of the blue objective and now are advancing to the brown line.


02:15 to 010:30 pm
2.15 2nd Cdn. Div. advised to disposition of the Bde. 2 Squadrons of Calvary passed Bde. H.Q. going towards WILLERVAL. **Artillery report Brown Objective captured.**
2.17 19th Bn. report Golden Spray in front of THELUS at 2.13 p.m. and 2.15 p.m.
2.20 21st Bn. report situation, reorganization and consolidation.
3.25 Wire received from 2nd Cdn. Div. giving general situation, and amount of prisoners captured. 2nd Cdn. Div. wire report from 1st Army giving situation at Red Objective.
3.35 **21st Bn. report the capture of 1 German Field Gun with 15 rounds of ammunition.**
3.40 G. 323 received from 2nd Cdn. Div. as to the holding of the Red Line.
3.55 G. 323 acknowledged by Bde.
4.25 B.M. 418 issued to all units regarding the reorganization of this Bde.
4.30 **B.M. 419 to 2nd Cdn. Div. situation is now quiet. Practically no hostile shelling in the 4th Bde. area**. At 5.30 a.m. the 4th Bde. in conjunction with other troops captures its objective and are now holding and consolidating the captured line. Wind strong westerly – Gas alert on. Addressed to Chateau, rept. Clean and Arrow.
4.45 21st Bn. wire in total amount of booty captured by them up to 4.00 p.m.
4.50 G. 330 received from 2nd Cdn. Div. giving situation of 3rd Cdn. Div.
6.05 Artillery report verbally that S.O.S. seen from far side of THELUS Wood.
6.55 G. 332 fro 2nd Cdn. Div. giving situation and success of 17th Corps.
8.25 19th Bn. support platoon and signal section each bring in captured machine gun.
8.30 2nd Cdn. Div. advised as to the disposition of this Brigade.
8.35 Receipt acknowledged to the 19th Bn. of M.G. 7933 and 8013.
8.50 Our barrage in reply to S.O.S. call in THELUS Wood have been very effective and everything is now O.K.
10.00 G. 336 2nd Cdn. Div. wire report from 17th Corps.
10.10 G. 337 from 2nd Cdn. Div. advising of the new S.O.S. arrangements.
10.30 Report on estimated casualties received from 20th Bn. by telephone.

This matrix of messages from 2:15 in the afternoon to 10:30 PM show that again the pace of the battle has slackened. The battalion and other units of the brigade are continuing to consolidate and their establishing positions for regimental aid posts and other infrastructure to support the defence of the newly won positions.

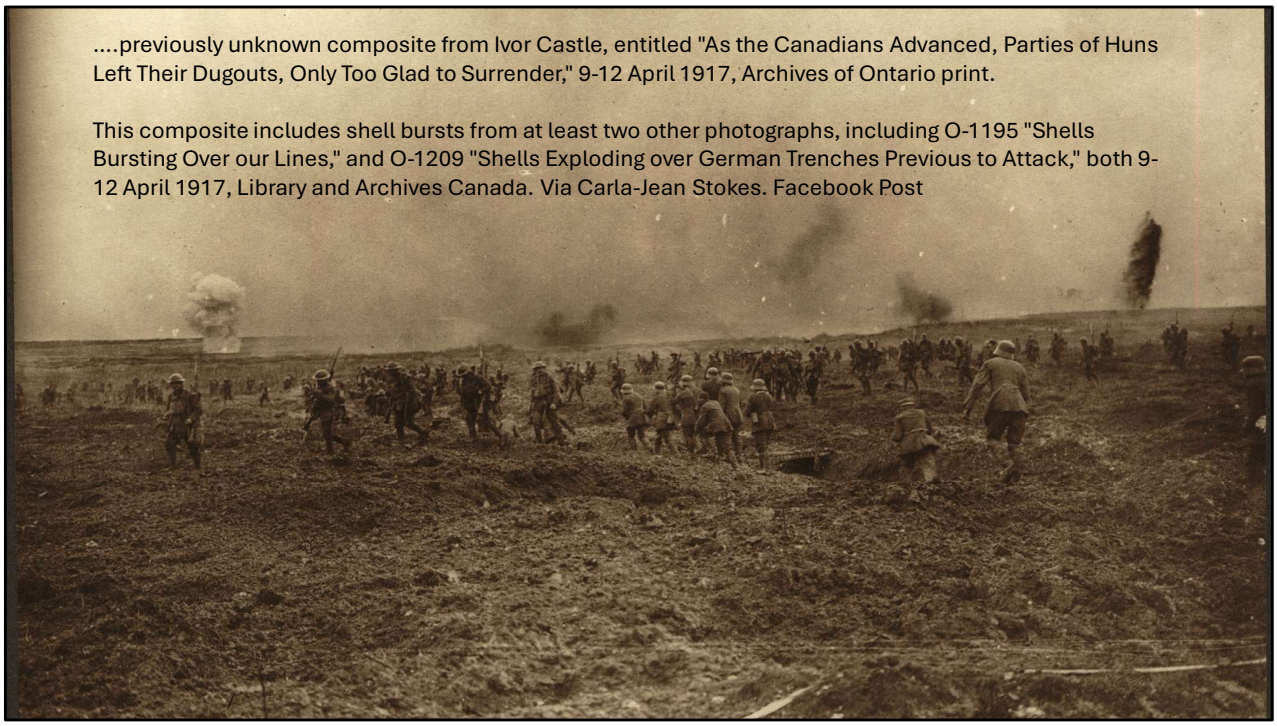
Captured Arms/War Trophies



	Machine Guns	Trench Mortar Carriers	Light Trench Mortars	Field Gun
18th	Not Reported			
19th	5	2	2	
20th	Not Reported			
21st	5		3	1

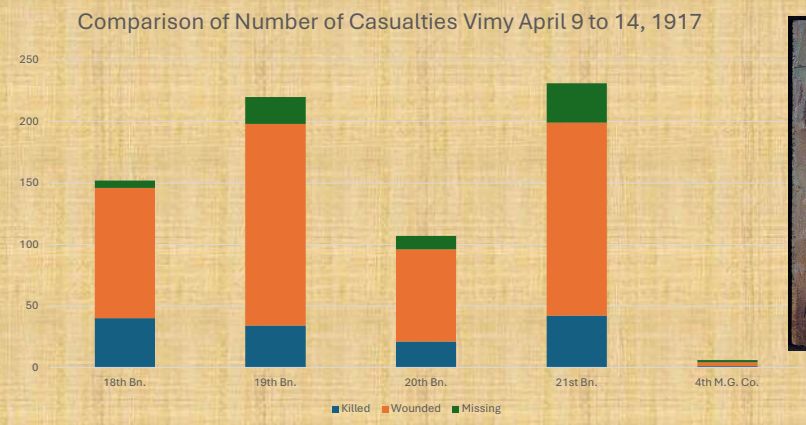
....previously unknown composite from Ivor Castle, entitled "As the Canadians Advanced, Parties of Huns Left Their Dugouts, Only Too Glad to Surrender," 9-12 April 1917, Archives of Ontario print.

This composite includes shell bursts from at least two other photographs, including O-1195 "Shells Bursting Over our Lines," and O-1209 "Shells Exploding over German Trenches Previous to Attack," both 9-12 April 1917, Library and Archives Canada. Via Carla-Jean Stokes. Facebook Post



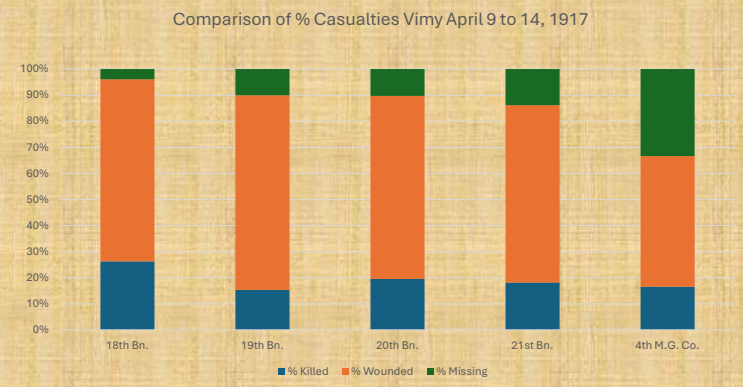
Total Casualties 4th CIB

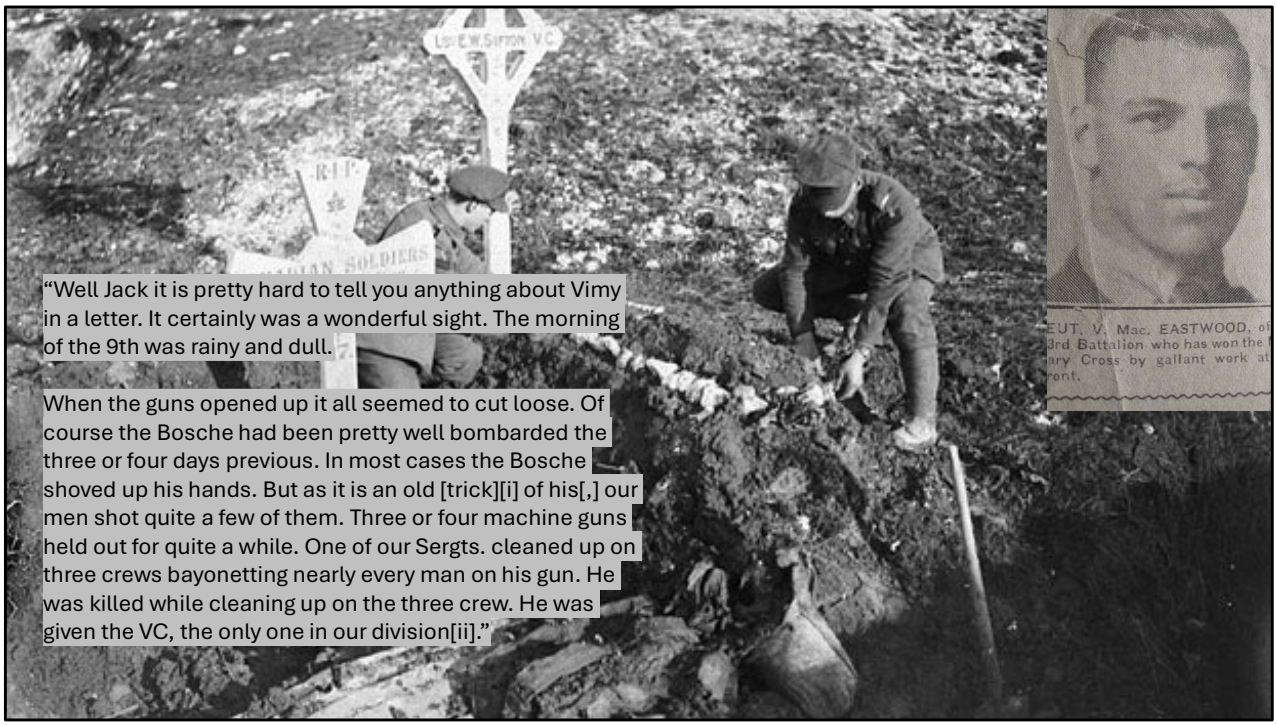
4th Canadian Infantry Brigade Casualties from April 9 to 14 1917 Inclusive							
Other Ranks	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Total/Bn.	% Killed	% Wounded	% Missing
18th Bn.	40	106	6	152	26.3%	69.7%	3.9%
19th Bn.	34	164	22	220	15.5%	74.5%	10.0%
20th Bn.	21	75	11	107	19.6%	70.1%	10.3%
21st Bn.	42	157	32	231	18.2%	68.0%	13.9%
4th M.G. Co.	1	3	2	6	16.7%	50.0%	33.3%
Total	138	505	73	716	26.3%	74.5%	33.3%



Percentage Wounded/Killed/Missing

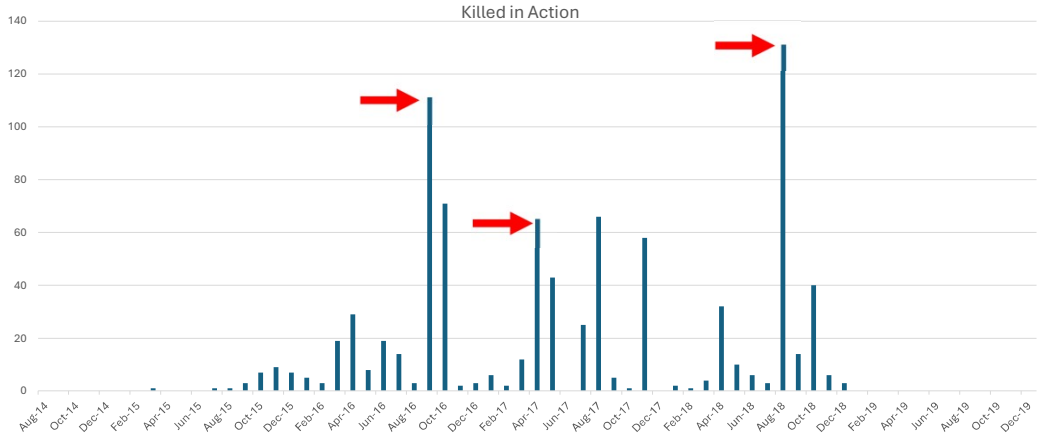
Unit	% Killed	% Wounded	% Missing
18th Bn.	26.3%	69.7%	3.9%
19th Bn.	15.5%	74.5%	10.0%
20th Bn.	19.6%	70.1%	10.3%
21st Bn.	18.2%	68.0%	13.9%
4th M.G. Co.	16.7%	50.0%	33.3%
	26.3%	74.5%	33.3%




Lieut. E.W. Sifton, V.C.
R.I.P.
"Well Jack it is pretty hard to tell you anything about Vimy in a letter. It certainly was a wonderful sight. The morning of the 9th was rainy and dull.
When the guns opened up it all seemed to cut loose. Of course the Bosche had been pretty well bombarded the three or four days previous. In most cases the Bosche shoved up his hands. But as it is an old [trick][i] of his[,] our men shot quite a few of them. Three or four machine guns held out for quite a while. One of our Sergts. cleaned up on three crews bayonetting nearly every man on his gun. He was killed while cleaning up on the three crew. He was given the VC, the only one in our division[ii]."
EUT. V. Mac. EASTWOOD, of
3rd Battalion who has won the
ary Cross by gallant work at
ront.

Without the sacrifice of thoses soldiers who put themselves in harms way, the casualties count would have been much different. Lance-Sergeant Sifton's valour was but only one of many that day.

18th Battalion KIA by Month est.



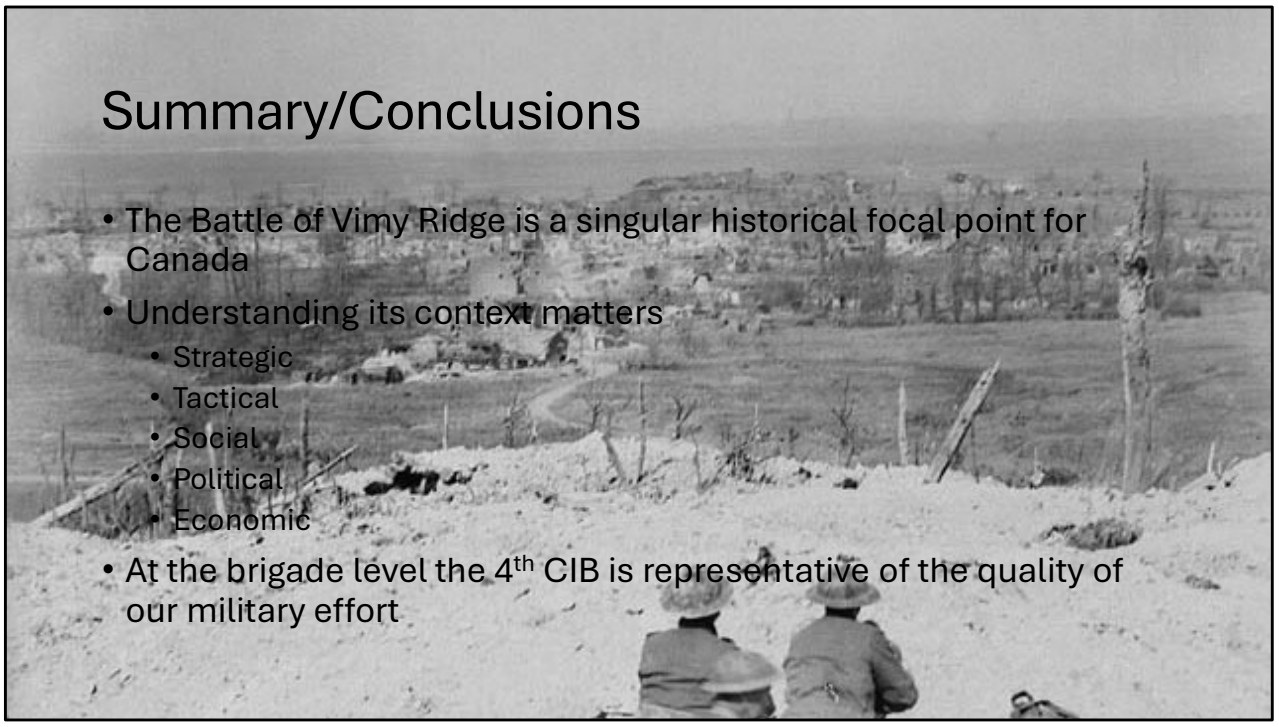
The Outcomes and Cost

- Outcomes
  - 4th CIB achieved success
  - Evidence
    - Objectives obtained
    - Prisoners captured
    - War trophies captured
    - Momentum maintained
    - No German counterattack
    - Diminished German infantry activity
    - Aggressive German artillery.

- Cost

4th Canadian Infantry Brigade Casualties from April 9 to 14 1917 Inclusive

Other Ranks	Killed	Wounded	Missing
18th Bn.	40	106	6
19th Bn.	34	164	22
20th Bn.	21	75	11
21st Bn.	42	157	32
4th M.G. Co.	1	3	2
Total	138	505	73
	19%	71%	10%
	29%	71%	
Approximate 4th CIB Casualty Rate			24%



Summary/Conclusions

- The Battle of Vimy Ridge is a singular historical focal point for Canada
- Understanding its context matters
  - Strategic
  - Tactical
  - Social
  - Political
  - Economic
- At the brigade level the 4th CIB is representative of the quality of our military effort